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THREE GRADES OF THOUGHT IN THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM GOLDING

BY

GARY BOTTING



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH


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The undersigned certify that they have read, and  
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Doctor of Philosophy.





## ABSTRACT

In each of his novels, William Golding confronts us with characters who exhibit what Golding calls different "grades" of thought. These characters manifest themselves in certain types: the type committed to rigid patterns of thought within the context of the irrational world of spirit, imagination, and religion; the type committed to rigid patterns of thought within the context of the rationalistic world of matter, mathematics, and science; and the type committed to no rigid pattern of thought at all, who is able to struggle with himself and his environment to attain an objective, dualistic view of a cosmos that incorporates both worlds. Golding sincerely believes, and attempts to show in his novels, that a philosophy of life which does not account for both the rational and the irrational elements in man is untenable, for both worlds are equally real. In the process of examining the technique used by Golding to convey such character types, attention has been given to the symbolism and iconography of the novels, and to his use of relatively untried methods, such as delayed revelation and transposed perspective, to obtain a sense of immediacy for his readers. Although Golding is not one of the great writers of the twentieth century, and although the quality of his writing varies markedly from one novel to another, his novels show a consistent development in theme, and reach a pinnacle of achievement with *The Spire*. In general, Golding is shown to fit fairly comfortably in the tradition of existential literature that burgeoned in Europe after the Second World War.



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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

- BB *The Brass Butterfly.* London: Faber and Faber, 1958.
- FF *Free Fall.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962.
- HG *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces.* London. Faber and Faber, 1965.
- IN *The Inheritors.* London: Faber and Faber, 1955.
- LF *Lord of the Flies.* London: Faber and Faber, 1954.
- PM *Pincher Martin.* London: Faber and Faber, 1956.
- PY *The Pyramid.* London: Faber and Faber, 1967.
- SG *The Scorpion God: Three Short Novels.* London: Faber and Faber, 1971.
- SP *The Spire.* London: Faber and Faber, 1964.
- TC *Talk: Conversations with Golding.* By Jack I. Biles. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1970.
- TH "Thinking As a Hobby." *Holiday*, August 1961, 10-13.



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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### I

William Golding has called himself a professional thinker, and has said that his novels are outlets for his thought (*TH* 13). He has also called himself a "fabulist" and has pointed out the connection between his two roles: "By the nature of his craft," he said in a lecture, ". . . the fabulist is didactic, desires to inculcate a moral lesson" (*HG* 85). Golding's concern is that of teaching human beings about themselves. In all of his novels, he asks pointed questions about man's legacy. Is man really sapient? What are the limits of his "wisdom"? More than anything else, Golding has concerned himself in his novels with the quality of man's thought, for it is supposedly man's capacity for abstract thought that sets him apart from other forms of life.

Golding has said that the subject of his novels is "the whole human condition" (*HG* 96). After the Second World War, he came to a very pessimistic conclusion regarding man. "Man is a fallen being," he wrote. "He is gripped by original sin. His nature is single and his state perilous." Man himself is not evil, but he produces evil instinctively, "as a bee produces honey" (*HG* 87-88). Golding has been adamant about this relationship between man and evil. "I'm not saying anyone is evil," he said in an interview. "I set out to discover whether there is that in man



which makes him do what he does, that's all."<sup>1</sup> In adopting this position, Golding approaches the fundamental position of existential writers of post-war Europe. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in *What is Literature?* (1947):

We have been taught to take Evil seriously. It is neither our fault nor our merit if we lived in a time when torture was a daily fact. Chateaubriand, Oradour, the Rue des Saussaies, Dachau, and Auschwitz have all demonstrated to us that Evil is not an appearance, that knowing its cause does not dispel it, . . . that it is not the effect of passions that might be cured, of a fear which might be overcome, of a passing aberration which might be excused, of an ignorance that might be enlightened, that it can in no way be diverted, brought back, reduced, and incorporated into idealistic humanism.<sup>2</sup>

Golding has said, "My generation is the existentialist generation" (TC 75), and we begin to see what he meant: both Golding and Sartre shared similar experiences during the war that affected their thought and their art, and led them to similar conclusions regarding the state of mankind.

The evil that man produces stems from a sickness inherent in man himself. Referring specifically to the post-war years and the milieu out of which *Lord of the Flies* emerged, Golding wrote: "I believed then, that man was sick — not exceptional man, but average man. I believed that the condition of man was to be a morally diseased creation and that the best job I could do at the time, was to trace the connection between his diseased nature and the international mess he gets himself into" (HG 87). Almost





anything men set their hand to, Golding said, "would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature." Any attempt to create order "breaks down in blood and terror" because man is "suffering from the terrible disease of being human." Understanding the disease is an essential part of understanding the definition of *Homo sapiens*, for although a few "exceptional" men may build up a resistance to the disease, all men are vulnerable to it, including Golding himself. It can be explained in terms of "the darkness of man's heart" alluded to on the last page of *Lord of the Flies*: the underlying chaos in man's soul. This "darkness" is made explicit in Golding's terms if we regard intelligence as a "tool" with which man is equipped. Unfortunately, the "average" man does not learn how to control all aspects of his intelligence, or (to extend Golding's metaphor) cannot cope with the "side effects" of intelligence — such as an overactive imagination. In this respect it is interesting to note what Caesar of *The Brass Butterfly* says of tools in the hand of man:

A steam ship, or anything powerful, in the hands of man, Phanocles, is like a sharp knife in the hands of a child. There is nothing wrong with the steam ship. There is nothing wrong with man's intelligence. The trouble is his nature" (BB 58).

Notice that Golding places "steam ship" in the category of "anything powerful" and subsequently links "steam ship" in parallel structure to "man's intelligence." The implication is that, although there is "nothing wrong" with man's intelligence, most men cannot control it because of their "nature": their behavior is controlled by



things other than "intelligence," such as the emotions and simple stimulus-response types of behavior which have little if anything to do with intelligence.

According to Golding, man learns to control his primal impulses by superimposing rationally conceived social and behavioral patterns, structures or systems. This concept is similar to that outlined by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), in which he conceived of two major forces working in the human mind to create pure tragedy and art, the forces of passion (the Dionysian) and the controlling forces of reason (the Apollonian).<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche's models, significantly enough, are from the Greeks, whose literature Golding studied and admired; and it is to Greek literature that both Nietzsche and Golding claim a primary indebtedness. It is not surprising that Golding should be concerned in all of his novels with the ways in which man attempts to control irrational forces of the human mind by application of logic, or by systems of one kind or another, for this is an important theme in Greek tragedy, and especially in the tragedy that Golding has claimed to admire the most -- that of Euripides.<sup>4</sup> The fact is that Golding is treating in his novels a theme central to both the modern and contemporary traditions, a theme that is both timeless and universal, but which appeared to assert itself strongly in the wake of disillusionment with the Age of Reason. It is the concern equally of the Dickens of *Hard Times* in his attack on utilitarianism, and of Hardy and Lawrence in their attacks on materialism and technocracy.<sup>5</sup> In Europe, similar ideas were explored





in the wake of Nietzsche by Freud and Mann. In fact the underlying "darkness" and terror in man's mind was explicitly defined in Freud's early notion of "primary" processes which he regarded as constituting a more basic type of thinking than reason.<sup>6</sup>

If Golding has reiterated what might be considered a cliché in twentieth century thought, he has done so in a very graphic way. He is not merely concerned with showing that the forces of passion and reason are contained in various combinations in each human being; in each of his novels he is also concerned with showing the consequences of imbalances of the central "processes" of the mind (such as "reason" and "emotion") that develop in the individual and in society at large. In *The Inheritors* and "Clonk Clonk" he went one step further by attempting to show that problems with the relationship between reason and emotion in man have been with man ever since he first existed as a species; in these and in other novels such as "The Scorpion God" and *The Spire*, Golding has been concerned with portraying the development of man from his dawning in prehistory, through the middle ages, to the modern day. His definition of man in anthropological terms places him very close to contemporary social anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss, who would say, with Golding, that all men by definition share certain features or "structures" of mind.<sup>7</sup> This may be a controversial way of explaining man's psychology, but its interest lies in the fact that Golding and Levi-Strauss should have come to similar conclusions at about the same time.



Golding came particularly close to the structuralist position when he referred explicitly to the universal applicability of his diagnosis of the human condition in a brief speech delivered at a writers' conference in Russia:

I am becoming ever more convinced that humanity — the people we are, those we meet, — is suffering from a terrible disease. I want to examine this disease, because only by knowing it, is there any hope of being able to control it. And when I look around me, to find examples of this sickness, I seek it in the place where it is most easily accessible to me, I mean in myself.

Although there is no direct evidence that he was "influenced" by Levi-Strauss, Golding's deep interest in anthropology, his generally recognized indebtedness to Sir James Frazer, who initiated the particular tradition of social anthropology to which Levi-Strauss adheres, and the general similarity of his work to contemporary French literature (including that of Sartre and Camus) would indicate that Golding was at least familiar with France's most prominent anthropologist. Levi-Strauss' structuralist position was outlined by Edmund Leach:

Since human brains are themselves natural objects and since they are substantially the same throughout the species *Homo sapiens*, we must suppose that when cultural products are generated . . . the process must impart to them certain universal (natural) characteristics of the brain itself. Thus, in investigating the elementary structures of cultural phenomena, we are also making discoveries about the nature of Man — facts which are true of you and<sup>9</sup> me as well as the naked savages of Central Brazil.

As Levi-Strauss himself put it, "Anthropology affords me an intellectual





satisfaction: it rejoins at one extreme the history of the world and at the other the history of myself, and it unveils the shared motivation of one and the other at the same moment."<sup>10</sup> The structures of the human mind are similar in all human beings, Levi-Strauss postulates, and he claims that he as a human being can understand the mind of other men and the collective mind of other cultures simply by applying the structures of his own mind to the elements of the myths of different cultures. Since Golding has stated the belief that "one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people; and the only enemy of man is inside him," it follows that he too believes that any man who takes the trouble to look inwardly will be able to see the nature of the disease that affects all mankind (*HG* 89). Unfortunately, most people do not know what to look for or how to look, and many deny the existence of so universal a sickness. In his novels, Golding seeks to show men exactly what to look for and how to look, and he suggests that the chances are great that the individual who is genuinely concerned with discovering the nature of mankind's essential illness will find its cause within his own soul.

Golding has isolated three different "grades" of thought which, when understood, provide a key or "formula" to his novels and to his view of man's essential illness. These grades of thought are not so much intended as a standard for moral assessment of individual characters, or for any value judgement applicable to human beings, as they are a means of categorizing observed differences in the thought and



corresponding behavior of individuals who respond to similar situations in different ways that are linked to their particular way of looking at the world. Golding realized that before he could hope to offer a cure or even a balm for mankind's sickness, he had to hold a mirror up to man's nature, to show his readers just how ill they were. "I believe that man suffers an appalling ignorance of his own nature," he wrote. "I produce my own view, in the belief that it may be something like the truth."<sup>11</sup> But in order to see humanity as it is, one must take an objective position. The writer, says Golding, must learn to become "free enough of society to be able to see it." He must develop "an intransigence in the face of accepted belief — political, religious, moral — any accepted belief. If he takes one of these for granted, then he ceases to have any use in society at all."<sup>12</sup>

The time between the publication of *Free Fall* (1959) and *The Spire* (1964) was for Golding a period of taking stock, of consolidating his ideas. It was also a period of concerted effort on Golding's part to clarify the intention and message of his novels. During this time, *Lord of the Flies* reached its zenith of popularity on American campuses; Golding made several trips to the United States after 1960, and for a year was writer-in-residence at Hollins College in Virginia. In 1962, he gave a series of lectures at U. C. L. A. in which he elucidated the themes of his novels and fables, especially *Lord of the Flies*. He wrote essays, reviews and articles for a





number of magazines, including *The Spectator*, *The Listener* and, in America, *Holiday*. He also allowed himself to be interviewed by scholars, critics and journalists. In short, it was a time in which Golding elucidated and elaborated the themes of his novels by providing autobiographical background, by stating his personal opinions on a wide variety of subjects and contemporary issues, and by providing thematic and critical analyses of his own works as well as those of others. Often essays written during this time with apparently flippant wit tell much about the nature of Golding's conception of such important themes as the nature of innocence, sin, and guilt, and the role of unique traits of the human mind such as its capacity to reason and to experience apocalypse. All of these themes combine to express the uniqueness of man's mind, his thoughts, and his moral and quasi-religious attitudes towards other human beings and the world at large.

When Golding refers to "three grades of thought," he is using the term "thought" in a mildly satiric way. He is not talking about the steps of thought necessary to reach metaphysical truth, as did, for example, A. N. Whitehead in *Modes of Thought*, although Golding would agree with much of what Whitehead had to say. Rather he is referring to that phenomenon of mind that all people refer to as "thought" in reference to their own capacities, whether they are true "thinkers" or not. This is the type of "thought" to which Ralph refers in *Lord of the Flies* when he says, "The trouble was,



if you were a chief you had to think . . . . Because thought was a valuable thing that got results" (LF 97). Obviously, not all people are capable of the same quality of thought. Some people let irrational prejudices obtrude as do the new people in responding to the Neanderthals in *The Inheritors*, and as do the socialites of Stilbourne in *The Pyramid*. Others base their thought on unfounded premises or unwarranted assumptions as do Christopher in *Pincher Martin* and Jocelin in *The Spire*. Some hardly ever use their own heads; they simply believe what others tell them without thinking things through clearly for themselves — as do most of the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. Others may use their capacity for thought to choose a viable system, which they adopt wholesale so that the "system," once adopted, does their thinking for them; in this category we can see Piggy of *Lord of the Flies*, Oliver and his father in *The Pyramid*, and Nick Shales of *Free Fall*. Since Golding's mentors, the people who supposedly helped Golding learn to think, were his teachers, he examined the thought of these self-styled "thinkers" in retrospect to establish its quality. And he came to the conclusion, in "Thinking As a Hobby," that his teachers were motivated more by feeling than by true thought, although all of them assumed that they were "thinkers."

Although humorous, "Thinking As a Hobby" is a bitterly satiric account of Golding's school days, virtually an attack on and dismissal of the educational system of his boyhood paralleling



in many ways the school episodes of *Free Fall*. Miss Parsons is obviously a type for Miss Pringle, for example, and Mr. Houghton anticipates Mr. Carew, the fresh-air fiend who shows off before Miss Manning. Unfortunately, many of these individuals from Golding's past, who are caricatured and ridiculed in "Thinking As a Hobby," are used by the author in his novels with little material change as readily recognizable, pre-packaged "types." This is one primary weakness of the novels that we shall deal with in greater detail in later chapters; suffice to say that the more blatantly or obviously that Golding presents his characters as clearly-defined "types" rather than as people, the less effective is the artistry of his novels, and the more mechanical his style appears to become. "Envoy Extraordinary" and *The Pyramid*, in which each character is cast in a specific mould and never manages to break free from it, particularly suffer from this tendency.

"Thinking As a Hobby" helps clarify the novelist's technique in building character types, and it is possible that Golding regretted having "shown his hand" as much as he did. It is possible too that he felt, in retrospect, that he had been too personal in his attack on his former school teachers. One thing is clear: he did not encourage republication in England of his first essay to be published in America. He left it out of his collection of essays, *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces*. And yet he has not disowned the article, so to speak, for as late as 1968 he gave permission for it to be anthologized in





North America. Perhaps Bernard F. Dick was right when he said that Golding probably thought the article "too personal" for inclusion in a book that would surely be read by any devotees among his former teachers or former fellow students.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps because "Thinking As a Hobby" was excluded from *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces*, the essay has been ignored in spite of its obvious importance as something of a landmark. It is the first of a series of articles contributed by Golding to *Holiday* magazine between 1961 and 1964, and it is the only one of his essays to have been republished in an anthology designed for student use, outside of his own collection of essays, or sourcebooks directly associated with him. The essay is to be taken seriously, for it sheds important light on the technique and content of the novels, especially when it is considered in context with other essays of the same period.

## II

The population of the world has been divided by Golding into three unequal groups, according to the quality of their thought. The bulk of the population ("nine-tenths," he has estimated) consists of persons who adopt an inferior grade of thought "full of unconscious prejudice, ignorance and hypocrisy." This type of thought, he wrote, "is what I came to call grade-three thinking, though more properly it is feeling, rather than thought." In his younger days,



Golding viewed grade-three thinking "with an intolerant contempt and incautious mockery," but he soon learned to respect the "immense solidarity of the group":

We had better respect them, for we are outnumbered and surrounded. A crowd of grade-three thinkers, all shouting the same thing, all warming their hands at the fire of their own prejudices, will not thank you for pointing out the contradictions in their beliefs (TH 11).

This observation is well exemplified, down to the metaphorical allusions, by the conduct of Jack and his tribe of hunters in the last three chapters of *Lord of the Flies*.

In "Thinking As a Hobby," Golding described several grade-three thinkers, among them his teacher, Mr. Houghton. We can obtain a better idea of Golding's grade-three thinkers if we examine the caricature of Mr. Houghton in some detail:

Mr. Houghton was given to high-minded monologues about the good life, sexless and full of duty. Yet in the middle of one of these monologues, if a girl passed the window, tapping along on her neat little feet, he would interrupt his discourse, his neck would turn of itself and he would watch her out of sight. In this instance, he seemed to me ruled not by thought but by an invisible and irresistible spring in his nape.

His neck was an object of great interest to me. Normally it bulged a bit over his collar. But Mr. Houghton had fought in the First World War alongside both American and French, and had come — by who knows what illogic? — to a settled detestation of both countries. If either country happened to be prominent in current affairs, no argument could make Mr. Houghton think well of it. He would bang the desk, his neck would bulge still further and go red. "You can say what you like," he would cry, "but I've thought about this — and I know what I think!"

Mr. Houghton thought with his neck (TH 10).



This is caricature, all right! But more important than the postures that Mr. Houghton is described as adopting are his motivations. Behind Mr. Houghton's facade of "high-minded monologues" seethes a dangerous passion — not just a sexual passion for girls with neat little feet, but a passionate hatred of whole nations of people. His judgement is clouded by his detestation; he clings to his prejudiced opinions with a religious fanaticism. He is incapable of listening to the logical arguments of others. And this store of hatred, hypocrisy and prejudice is hidden behind a devout veneer of puritanical oratory. In Mr. Houghton's fanaticism lie the roots of religious, political, nationalistic and racial bigotry. And yet he is too proud to realize that his thought is of an inferior grade, that it is emotional rather than reasonable, controlled by the adrenal glands rather than the brain. We see his type of character parodied again and again in the novels, most obviously in Twal of *The Inheritors*, Miss Pringle of *Free Fall*, Jocelin of *The Spire*, Oliver's mother and the Claymores of *The Pyramid*, the Head Man of "The Scorpion God," and the Leopard Men of "Clonk Clonk." Such grade-three thinkers promote their brand of bigotry by passing on nationalistic myths from father to son, irrational, inaccurate, but believed totally. This type of colloquial history, says Golding, "is a history felt in the blood and bones.

Sometimes it is dignified by a pretty name, but I am not sure in my mind, that it is ever anything but pernicious . . . . My point is that however pathetic or amusing we find the lesser manifestations of prejudice, when they go beyond a certain point no one in the world can doubt that they are wholly evil (HG 91-92).





In his *Nausea*, Jean-Paul Sartre appropriately called such people "Les Salauds" — "The Stinkers." With them, as with Golding's third grade thinkers, national, racial, religious, tribal and social prejudices handed down from generation to generation have become "habits of feeling which have acquired a force of instinct . . . . They are an unconscious legacy wished on children by their parents:

Indeed, as I make these words, I am aware in myself of resents [*sic*], indignations and perhaps fears which have nothing to do with today, with the England and Germany of today, in a word, with reality, but are there, nevertheless. I got them from off-campus history; and unless I make a conscious effort I shall hand them on. These impulses, prejudices, even perhaps these just hates which are nevertheless backward-looking are what parents luxuriating in a cheap emotion can wish on their children without being properly conscious of it and so perpetuate division through generations (HG 92).

The tendency towards grade-three thought, as Golding indicates here, is inherent in all human beings, although more refined thinkers manage to control their emotions and come to recognize their learned prejudices for what they are. Since grade-three thinkers are motivated by emotion rather than by reason they are more susceptible to "off-campus history" than more refined thinkers.

The intolerance of grade-three thinkers stems from an inability to accept any way of life or philosophy of life markedly different from their own. Thus a person committed to a certain religion (such as Jack's) will be unable to see moral virtues in those who adhere to another system (such as Piggy's), and perhaps will pray devoutly for the destruction of his "wicked" rivals: if



he grows impatient, he may well take the responsibility into his own hands, as do the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. The "faith" of such "thinkers" could just as easily be in a political party or rebel group than in a formal religion, as it is in the case of Philip, the government spy; Miss Pringle's nephew, who was "high up in the blackshirts" (FF 73); and Sammy's friends in the Communist Party, including his wife Taffy and her father. Such commitment to institutions that do one's thinking for one, Golding believes, limits one's viewpoint or breadth of vision of the universe and distorts the truth or reality of mankind's situation. All too often, members of such groups are boosted in their irrational faith solely by the knowledge that they are not alone. They feel a need to belong, to be popular among their fellows. But even the need for this feeling of security is often totally unconscious, so submerged are they in the system that protects them and does their thinking for them. On this score, Golding's grade-three thought resembles Nietzsche's "herd instinct" which he defined in part as "the instinct of the mediocre against the exceptional." He noted: "Enormous advantage possessed by this movement, however much cruelty, falseness, and narrow-mindedness have assisted it."<sup>14</sup> He added:

*The herd instinct speaks. It wants to be master: hence its "thou shalt!" — it will allow value to the individual only from the point of view of the whole, for the sake of the whole, it hates those that detach themselves — it turns the hatred of all individuals against them.*<sup>15</sup>

This quotation is particularly useful in coming to understand



*Lord of the Flies*. Jack, as "evil genius," is a Nietzschean priest, the leader of the herd.

In Golding's view, grade-three thinking is little more than a controlling outlet for fears that beset every individual, fears that are inherited by all men, fears which are part of mankind's universal sickness. But the pure imagination of man and his irrational drives and emotions and fears cannot be dismissed casually as if they did not exist. Calling such phenomena of the mind "devil" or "evil" or objectifying one's own metaphysical fears into a tangible scapegoat does not lessen the fact of the existence of the world of imagination, "the world of spirit." In the past century, such irrational drives of man as those exhibited by Mr. Houghton (or by the boys on the island) have been largely responsible for, among other things, two world wars in which the irrational masses followed the dictates of a group of men whom they revered as "thinkers" -- and whose decisions were accepted and adopted as law.<sup>16</sup> Golding has said that what happened in Germany under Hitler could happen anywhere given the appropriate political circumstances because human beings everywhere through time are essentially the same.

If you had switched babies in the cradle at the right historical moment, by and large, Americans would have done what Germans did and vice versa. With one exception, of course: that you might have switched babies and Hitler might have been a saint rather than what it [*sic*] was (TC 38).

Golding sees a close relationship between the "evil genius" and the "saint," and there are similarities between Jack and Simon, as we shall see.<sup>17</sup>





## III

Grade-two thinkers constitute the second-largest group that Golding isolates. Their primary occupation is "the detection of contradictions" in the thought of others:

Grade-two thinkers do not stampede easily, though often they fall into the other fault and lag behind. Grade-two thinking is a withdrawal, with eyes and ears open. It became my hobby and brought satisfaction and loneliness in either hand. For grade-two thinking destroys without having the power to create. It set me watching the crowds cheering His Majesty the King and asking myself what all the fuss was about, without giving me anything positive to put in the place of that heady patriotism (*TH* 12).

Grade-two thinkers deny the meaningfulness in the universe of anything but empirical or observable data (picture, for example, Piggy or Nick or Oliver's father). The world of spirit, the world of belief, faith and religious fervour is dismissed as "false" or "irrelevant" by each one in turn. Golding remarked, "Grade-two thinking is a menace to religion and knocks down sects like skittles."

Golding himself, as he was at one stage of his life, will serve as an example of a grade-two thinker. He reached this level of thought, he has written, at the age of fourteen, that is, in 1925. In "Thinking As a Hobby," he described his attempted seduction of Ruth, a "serious and attractive" Methodist, who tried to convert him by statistical data and argument instead of relying on "the Holy Spirit":

At last she remarked that there were an awful lot of Methodists, and they couldn't be wrong, could they — not all those millions? That was too easy, said I restively (for the nearer you were to Ruth,



the nicer she was to be near to), since there were more Roman Catholics than Methodists anyway; and they couldn't be wrong, could they — not all those hundreds of millions? An awful flicker of doubt appeared in her eyes. I slid my arm round her waist and murmured breathlessly that if we were counting heads, the Buddhists were the boys for my money. But Ruth had *really* wanted to do me good, because I was so nice. She fled. The combination of my arm and those countless Buddhists was too much for her (TH 11-12).

Ruth is a model for almost all of the girls to appear as major characters in the novels: for Euphrosyne of "Envoy Extraordinary," Mary of *Pincher Martin*, Beatrice of *Free Fall*, Goody Pangall of *The Spire*, and even Evie of *The Pyramid*. The essence of all of them is to be seen in this quick caricature of a girl committed to puritanical virtues, beset upon by a young man who has no use for her religious or moral values. And the glimpse of Golding himself in adolescence is also a caricature of the *type* of person that the author has observed as being controlled by grade-two thought. We see his type developed beyond caricature in Christopher of *Pincher Martin*, and in Sammy Mountjoy of *Free Fall*; and we see the same type retaining unidimensional quality in the form of parody in Oliver of *The Pyramid*.

Grade-two thinkers take the responsibility upon themselves to demolish what they see to be the irrational faith of other people. Since logic is the tool of destruction, the means of thought is perhaps more commendable than pure emotion although the end is not.<sup>18</sup> As demonstrated by Christopher Martin and Sammy Mountjoy, atheism



is a natural by-product of grade-two thought, for in a world without faith there can be no God. Strictly logical argument not only knocks down sects, it demolishes any concept of God as well. Taking logical argument to extremes, grade-two thinkers can deduce that men are merely advanced mammals, and can treat their more gullible fellows as such. Since codes of morality are not strictly logical, they can be dismissed. Since aesthetic values cannot be measured on any scale of logic, they too, to be consistent, must be cast aside. Compassion, love, and other human values that are not strictly prudential can be argued away if the grade-two thinker so desires. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this attitude anywhere in Golding is in Sammy Mountjoy's use and abuse of Beatrice Ifor in *Free Fall*.

Grade-two thinking is a logical rejection of the inexplicable. Instead of explaining the mysteries surrounding mankind or trying to come to terms with the darkness surrounding man, the grade-two thinker smugly dismisses the possibility of the darkness, and is destined to live in the hollowness of a totally physical world. This kind of thought is even more destructive than grade-three thought in that it demolishes the very concept of the human soul — without offering anything in its place. It limits one's breadth of vision and distorts the truth just as much as grade-three; for just as the irrationally religious person is intolerant of the irreligious, so the confirmed grade-two thinker is intolerant of what he considers to be the irrational beliefs of the religious.





Because of its reliance on empirical observation, and logical argument from such observation, grade-two thinking is frequently manifest in the novels as scientific rationalism, a philosophy of life against which Golding has fought for years.<sup>19</sup> He himself was led to adopt grade-two thought by following the example of his father, who (according to Golding) was a pure rationalist and do-it-yourself scientist who absorbed the works of such rationalist prophets as H. G. Wells.<sup>20</sup> Golding has said that he was brought up on Wells, and that the *Outline of History* was like a Bible to his father, whom he described as "incarnate omniscience" (HG 168, 170). And yet, for all his knowledge, Golding's father could never quite communicate with the young Billy. For there is no room in grade-two thought for the world of spirit. "How could I talk to them about darkness and the irrational?" asked Golding of his parents. "They knew so much, had such certainties, were backing all the obvious winners. I floated in their world, holding on to a casual hand, sometimes sinking again in the dark." As far as Golding's father was concerned, the horrors and fears of the world of spirit did not exist (HG 169-70).

By 1932, after two years at Oxford, Golding began to reject his father's rationalist philosophy of life and transferred from the sciences to the study of English literature.<sup>21</sup> Before the war, he had believed in "the perfectibility of social man; that a correct structure of society would produce goodwill; and that therefore you could remove all social ills by a reorganization of society," —



a rationalistic solution to social problems. But during the war, Golding witnessed or became aware of atrocities "from which I still have to avert my mind lest [sic] I should be physically sick" (HG 86-87). Although he recognized that man's irrational but intentional brutality to man was evil, he also saw that any concept of morality or artistic development depended on non-rational assessment: "The difference between being alive and being an inorganic substance is just this proliferation of experience, this absence of pattern."<sup>22</sup> Rationalism merely ascertained what was possible or impossible in empirical terms, or what was logical and what illogical. But as Sammy Mountjoy discovers, man has to draw on the non-rational world of spirit — the world that the grade-two thinker denies — to ascertain what is moral or immoral, or, for that matter, what is beautiful and what ugly. During the war, Golding came to believe that science had been overestimated by society. After the war, while he taught at Bishop Wordsworth School in Salisbury, he began to realize that science had taken priority over the arts in the Twentieth Century English educational system, and that this had shaped the sentiments of the populace into favouring a science-oriented education system. In 1960, his condemnation of the education system operating in England during the 1950's was published in a powerful (although journalistic) statement in *The Times Literary Supplement* under the title "On the Crest of the Wave." He wrote:



Now I suppose that I had better admit that all this is about "Science" in quotation marks, and I do so with fear and trembling. For to attack "Science" is to be labelled reactionary; and to applaud it, the way to an easy popularity. "Science" has become a band-waggon on which have jumped parsons and television stars, novelists and politicians, every public man, in fact, who wants an easy hand-up, all men who are either incapable of thought or too selfishly careerist to use it; so that the man in the street is persuaded by persistent half-truths that "Science" is the most important thing in the world, and Education has been half-persuaded, too. But it cannot be said often enough or loudly enough that "Science" is not the most important thing. Philosophy is more important than "Science"; so is history; so is courtesy, come to that, so is aesthetic perception . . . .

. . . Our humanity rests in the capacity to make value judgements, unscientific assessments, the power to decide that this is right, that wrong, this ugly, that beautiful, this just, that unjust. Yet these are precisely the questions which "Science" is not qualified to answer with its measurement and analysis.<sup>23</sup>

The arts and philosophy investigate areas of man's mind which science cannot penetrate. Only these can "cure or ameliorate sicknesses so deeply seated that we begin to think of them in our new wealth as built-in: boredom and satiety, selfishness and fear." Over-emphasis on science necessarily dulls the sense of justice and morality and the capacity for creativity, for, said Golding, "the human spirit is wider and more complex than the whole of the physical evolutionary system." Ultimately, the human spirit defies scientific analysis, since it is both "limitless and inexhaustible."<sup>24</sup> According to Golding, rationalism, or the "scientific" approach to understanding mankind, which is the greatest if not the only fruit of grade-two thought, can do little more than explain man's environment. It can





at most give man a context. What grade-two thinkers fail to realize is that man is *not* by nature reasonable; and his very quality of the capacity for irrationality defines him as man rather than robot. Golding set himself the task in his novels of examining man in various situations through time to demonstrate what perhaps has become a truism in the second half of the Twentieth Century: that man is not a totally rational animal but is controlled largely by responses to the "darkness" of his heart. An absolutely rational, mathematical view of the universe negates the importance of fantasies and fiction, poetry and mythology, and all other outlets of the artistic imagination which in effect shapes one's experience of reality.<sup>25</sup> However clichéd Golding's opinions regarding science or rationalism may seem to be, to understand his position as a social critic is also to understand some of the very fundamental issues that arise in his novels.

#### IV

The grade-three thinker closes the door on reason. The grade-two thinker closes the door on everything *but* empirically-based reason. Because of their limitations, neither type of thought is in itself adequate for explaining man's conduct. Grade-three thinkers hide man's nature behind totems and sit back smugly believing that God is with them. Grade-two thinkers ignore man's nature altogether, and concern themselves with logical exercises and with "things" rather than people. Neither system of thought is complete, for *Homo sapiens* lives in two worlds at once: a world of spirit and a



world of matter. Both worlds, as Sammy Mountjoy comes to realize, are equally real. Both reason and religion can have profound meaning for individual members of the human race. But while single-minded devotion to one particular type of thought results in a warped view of the world, any totally objective view must contain or encompass both worlds. If a man is to have a complete and wholesome view of the universe, says Golding, he must account for and make room in his philosophy for both reason and faith, both science and the arts, both the physical and spiritual elements of the universe and man. He must accept the scientific fact of man's existence, but he must equally accept the fact that man has the capacity to conceive of or create spiritual or artistic entities which are in themselves valuable extensions of human nature.<sup>26</sup>

And here we approach what Golding meant by grade-one thinking. Golding's "way out" of the grade-three/grade-two controversy is not merely to effect a compromise or balance between the two types of thought, but to transcend them. His escape is partially through a deep appreciation and understanding of natural laws operating in the universe, and partially through epiphany, revelation, intuition, and poetry experienced by those who have become humble and perceptive enough to accept and experience both the world of spirit and the world of reason. The highest grade of thought for Golding is the type which asks, "'What is truth?' and sets out to find it" (*TH* 12). Golding's view of the highest quality of thought is close to the positions of Martin Buber and Paul Tillich, to whose philosophy



Golding's religious ideas have a distinct resemblance. Buber wrote:

The man who thinks "existentially", that is, who stakes his life in his thinking, brings into his real relation to the truth not merely his conditioned qualities but also the unconditioned nature, transcending them, of his quest, of his grasp, of his indomitable will for the truth, which also carries along with it the whole personal power of standing the test.<sup>27</sup>

Grade-one thinkers, says Golding, are "few and far between."

But he gives examples of such superior thinkers — and one of them, paradoxically enough, is identified as Albert Einstein, whom Golding once met on a bridge in Magdalen Deer Park at Oxford:

For perhaps five minutes we stood together on the bridge, undeniable grade-one thinker and breathless aspirant. With true greatness, Professor Einstein realized that any contact was better than none. He pointed to a trout wavering in mid-stream.

He spoke: "*Fisch.*"

My brain reeled. Here I was, mingling with the great, and yet helpless as the veriest grade-three thinker. Desperately I sought for some sign by which I might convey that I, too, revered pure reason. I nodded vehemently. In a brilliant flash I used up half my German vocabulary.

"*Fisch. Ja. Ja.*"

For perhaps another five minutes we stood side by side. Then Professor Einstein, his whole figure still conveying good-will and amiability, drifted away out of sight (TH 12-13).

Here, Golding falls prey to his own criticism of grade-three thinkers. For his virtual adoration of Einstein, the hero-worship displayed on the bridge, is not materially different from the type of patriotism displayed by grade-three thinkers in cheering for the King. Unlike his earlier descriptions of Mr. Houghton, Miss Parsons, Ruth and himself, however, here Golding rises above caricature to describe





Einstein in movingly human terms. But he has shifted from parody to paradox: How can Einstein, more than anyone else the inventor of the nuclear age, be a grade-one thinker? Golding would respond by saying that his greatness lies in his being able intuitively to understand the relations of things in the universe as could no other man in our age. He merely showed man the way, gave man fire, as it were; what successive generations of men chose to do with their newfound knowledge is quite apart from Einstein's discovery of the dynamics of the universe in nuclear terms in the first place.

Golding has distinguished between the type of "scientist" who is a proponent of the "Science" which he criticised so adamantly in "On the Crest of the Wave" (the type who, like Phanocles in "Envoy Extraordinary," uses the knowledge learned from others to create bombs and warships, or who like Oliver in *The Pyramid* learns to manufacture poison gas for use in the war), and "the genuine scientist, the natural philosopher" who is "at most, part of one per cent." Einstein was (for Golding at least) such a genuine "natural philosopher." So, we suspect, is Simon in *Lord of the Flies*:

Such a boy or man is intelligent enough to move outside his own subjects and find what there is for him in the arts. He is likely to discover the novel or poetry while the inferior intellectual material left on art's side is giving up wrestling with it.<sup>28</sup>

Einstein, like Simon, not only had a keen intuition but was something of a mystic, in the sense that he pursued the "mysterious." He wrote, "The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is



the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science."<sup>29</sup> Einstein himself criticised reliance either on illogical thought or on purely logical thought.<sup>30</sup> He said that he disliked "the basic positivistic attitude, which from my point of view is untenable," and wrote in a letter to Maurice Solovine in 1956, "It is impossible to get anywhere without sinning against reason."<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere he said that "every true theorist is a kind of trained metaphysicist."<sup>32</sup>

Grade-one thinkers, as Golding sees them, have a metaphysical insight not only into the human mind but into the operative forces of the universe. Another famous figure deeply revered by Golding as such a thinker was Copernicus, who is described as "very much an intellectual."

Yet looking at the early portraits of him, one wonders. There is a kind of sensitivity about the face that could well belong to another sort of person. Sometimes, in the early woodcuts, he holds a lily in his hand (HG 34-35).

A great similarity exists between the approach to knowledge taken by both Einstein and Copernicus. Golding points out that Copernicus had "no proof" for his theories and "he had not worked out a mathematical cosmology" ahead of time. How, then, did the astronomer come to accept his theory as true? Golding's speculations again indicate a relationship between two of the greatest natural philosophers of all time:

Does the key lie in the lily. . . ? Does it lie in the sensitive, thoughtful face? For it is the face of a poet. In Pythagoras, religion, mathematics and poetry meet. Is that not what the lily means? There was a supreme and dangerous knowledge, and



initiates felt toward it as a poet feels — by intuition. Copernicus had that intuition, but he was a mathematician; the rest of his life had to be devoted to proving what he already believed.

. . . Copernicus committed himself to equating results of observation to this hypothesis. because the hypothesis was an aesthetic one; a scheme not known nor proved but *felt* to be true (HG 36).

What Golding says of Copernicus in this emotionally-charged essay could equally apply to Einstein. Both men, in their appeal to common sense and intuition, in Golding's words "attempted the impossible." They both had a deep understanding of the operations of the universe that rational demonstration alone could never provide; yet their way of looking at the world was not simple faith, but reasoned understanding and comprehension transcending both faith and logic. Their mutual first-grade thought is well symbolized by the lily — "a symbol that truth is beauty, knowledge and God." Golding added, "The intuition of Copernicus was the intuition common to all great poets and all great scientists; the need to simplify and deepen, until what seems diverse is seen to lie in the hollow of one hand" (HG 40).<sup>33</sup>

Yet another grade-one thinker, in Golding's opinion, was the philosopher Rudolf Steiner, whom Golding has regarded as a seer who had a "head-on collision" with the grade-two thought prevalent at the turn of the century. Steiner's idea of thought in many ways parallels Golding's own:

To Steiner, thinking itself is a spiritual activity, a kind of celestial dance that the sons of the morning are performing in the mind





of man. Therefore philosophy and science, with their exercise of the strict forms of thought, are a direct way into communion with God.<sup>34</sup>

Regretfully, Steiner was dismissed or ignored by a world smug in its rationalism, said Golding. But today, people desire "to break out of the globe of their own skulls, and find the significance in the cosmos that mere measurement misses." Steiner did just this.

So does Golding in his novels:

Any man who claims to have found a bridge between the world of the physical sciences and the world of the spirit is sure of a hearing. Is this not because most of us have an unexpressed faith that the bridge exists, even if we have not the wit to discover it?<sup>35</sup>

Golding has both the faith and the wit. He demonstrates in his novels the way in which the novelist can craft into his work an acquired perceptiveness and understanding and intuition and insight into the nature of man that incorporate more than a mere rational analysis of man's situation. "In all the books," Golding said in an interview, "I have suggested a shape in the universe that may, as it were, account for things.

The greatest pleasure is not — say — sex or geometry. It is just understanding. And if you can get people to understand their own humanity — well, that's the job of the writer.

He should be free enough of society to be able to see it. His place is either understanding what men are or, if he can't, trying to put before other men a recognizable picture of the mystery.

His job is to scrape the labels off things, to take nothing for granted,<sup>36</sup> to show the irrational where it exists. . . .



## V

So far in this chapter, Golding has been presented as a writer who fits reasonably comfortably into the mainstream of the existential tradition. But his classification of grades of thought is, I believe, informing and illuminating not so much as a philosophical system as a way to approach his novels and the character types presented within them. Despite Golding's claim to be a "professional thinker," there is no question that his skill as a novelist far outweighs his skill as an amateur philosopher, and his art of writing rather than his skill at thinking is the primary concern of this thesis.

But if his way of looking at — and creating — convincing character types assists him to convey a message in the novels, there are dangers inherent in Golding's technique, among them the tendency to caricature, to portray characters in such a way that they do not come to life, or at least do not develop, in the course of a given novel. Perhaps the most blatant examples of this tendency are to be found in "Envoy Extraordinary" and *The Pyramid*, but the tendency is present in every novel, and the degree to which Golding succeeds in suppressing it is often a measure of his success as an artist. All too often the "grades of thought" become a mechanically introduced intrusion that make the characters appear more as manipulatable puppets than human beings — and this is a definite weakness in the novels. But by the same token, when Golding starts out with a caricature and builds from it so that the character is allowed to grow beyond



itself, the novelist succeeds in creating convincing personages with whom we can identify and empathize. Witness Ralph in *Lord of the Flies*, Christopher in *Pincher Martin*, Sammy in *Free Fall*, and Jocelin in *The Spire*, none of whom Golding can quite contain in neat little boxes of "grades of thought;" all of them come to transcend themselves, to outgrow the sum of what they are initially, and the situation in which they find themselves. They more than anyone else in Golding's novels become human beings who come alive.

Each of the following chapters will deal specifically with a major novel, in chronological sequence of composition and publication from *Lord of the Flies* (1954) to *The Pyramid* (1967). In cases where specific details of the action of the novels are difficult to grasp on a single reading, or have been widely misunderstood or misinterpreted, I shall dwell at some length on exposition of the plot to provide a context for discussion of the works from the perspective of Golding's use of the three grades of thought in his portrayal of character types. For purposes of analysis, I have divided each chapter systematically to treat character types which exemplify each of the grades. By applying this "formula," the fundamental similarity of Golding's novels can be demonstrated, character types common to all of them can be readily isolated, and Golding's development as a writer from one novel to the next can be examined objectively to demonstrate fundamental consistency. In each chapter I have examined separately the narrative art of Golding in order to demonstrate both his skill and his shortcomings as a writer, and to assess the relative literary merits of each successive work.





## CHAPTER TWO: LORD OF THE FLIES

### I

*Lord of the Flies*, first published in 1954, is still read avidly, especially in the classroom, for what it has to offer in terms of its "fable." William Golding and his critics alike have been helpful in defining and interpreting the "fable" in many different ways, varying from the contention that it is "Calvinist"<sup>1</sup> to the assumption that it is a political allegory.<sup>2</sup> It has been analysed in terms of Greek tragedy<sup>3</sup> and as a reaction against Victorian optimism.<sup>4</sup> And indeed the novel is popular and controversial fodder for critics and students alike if only because it does lend itself so readily to levels of interpretation.<sup>5</sup> It remains the most popular of Golding's books, and the bulk of criticism of Golding has focussed upon it rather than on the later novels. Yet although it is by far the most powerful in its imagery, its theme, its action and its characterization, it has the greatest number of technical flaws. For the plot of *Lord of the Flies* rests heavily on a series of scientific impossibilities, improbabilities and inconsistencies that require the reader from the outset to suspend disbelief. Although Golding has admitted to a great interest in Science Fiction,<sup>6</sup> in *Lord of the Flies* he was not very careful about researching or even thinking through the implications of some of the events he describes. His talents lie in his ability to tell "a thumping good tale," and in his skill in presenting highly defined verbal portraits using a very few well-placed words. He relies



too on convincing portrayals of various character types.

The major characters in *Lord of the Flies* cope with the situation in which they find themselves in various ways that are linked to the ways in which they think. The vast majority of the boys do not think at all: they are controlled by emotion. Even when they are confronted with an important decision such as choosing a leader, the boys come to a consensus without thought: they acclaim Ralph, because he had blown the conch and "was set apart" (LF 30). By the end of the novel they have turned about-face in their attitude towards Ralph, but they have not done so logically. When the naval officer confronts them in the last chapter, he calls them a "pack" as if they were wolves.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the viciousness of the boys has been demonstrated to him by the very sight of Ralph, who, with bruised face, swollen eye, his body pierced by a spear and generally scratched from his flight through the jungle, is pursued by the ululating savages to the brink of death. "Having a war or something?" the officer asks, and he whistles in amazement when he learns that at least two boys have been killed (LF 247). Had the naval officer asked any one of the painted and armed "little boys" why they were pursuing Ralph, none of them could have given a satisfactory answer. It is true that Ralph may have been regarded by Jack as a threat to the tribe that he had created for himself. True too that the boys were compelled to obey Jack's system if they wanted to avoid torture such as that doled out to Wilfred,



Sam and Eric — or even violent death. Jack's system of terrorist power politics is a very efficient means of controlling the herd, as many nations of the world have discovered, but if the system is to work, all dissenters must be eradicated.<sup>8</sup> Jack, and perhaps Roger, realize this, but *all* of the boys pursue Ralph with unmitigated loyalty to the system in which they find themselves.<sup>9</sup> In Jack's system there is no room for individual assessment of what is right or wrong, or even what is prudent and what imprudent. The boys on the island have given up their free will to Jack, or, more specifically, to the Lord of the Flies, the devil that protects them from awareness of the beast that lurks within. As Jack realizes in "a theological speculation," he and his followers are on the "right" side of the beast, not on the wrong side.

Most of the boys are well suited to the system they have joined if only because they have not learned to think rationally or morally but rather have pursued the pseudo-hedonistic idea of "what's fun" as their ultimate end. Even Ralph falls into this mistake, promising fun rather than more practical rewards (*LF* 48); and the vast majority of the boys naturally decide that building shelters and keeping a rescue beacon alight are not much fun, while hunting and killing and dancing and wearing warpaint and rolling rocks are "Wacko!" None of the boys is concerned with the future implications of his actions; when the boys hunt Ralph, the thrill of the chase infects them all.



The "fun now" philosophy demands an absence of thought. It requires adherents who do not, or cannot, contemplate the alternatives, who by and large are controlled by emotion rather than by reason, by "feeling rather than thought." The system the boys have committed themselves to has only one enemy: Reason, the enemy that all three victims, Simon, Piggy and Ralph, demonstrate to varying degrees. Jack and his followers deliberately destroy reason. Free of its restrictions, the boys indulge in the violence of hunting and the feasting on meat. When the boys have to make a decision between "common sense" and "the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill," they reject common sense. Ralph recognizes that he will be pursued into the ground "'Cos I had some sense'" (LF 229), but Eric warns him, "'Never mind what's sense. That's gone - '" (LF 232). Frenzied rituals and constant talk of beasts and ghosts lead the boys irrationally to accept the existence of the beast in a physical form. Their fears prevent them from investigating the object on the mountain more closely. Besides, Samneric's description of what they saw on top of the mountain is vivid enough to be convincing: from the reality of seeing an object sitting up, and seeing its obvious physical characteristics, the twins let their imaginations run rampant:

"There were eyes - "  
 "Teeth - "  
 "Claws - "  
 "We ran as fast as we could - "  
 "Bashed into things - "





"The beast followed us — "  
 "I saw it slinking behind the trees — "  
 "Nearly touched me — " (LF 124).

The scratches on Eric's face add to the drama, and not even Piggy can doubt the word of the twins. Simon alone remains incredulous (LF 128), while Ralph clearly believes in the beast and identifies it with the boar which he hit with his spear (LF 140). Here, Golding has "added stroke to stroke," exaggeration to exaggeration, yet has retained the credibility of characterization of the twins. Dramatic irony remains powerfully in force from here on to the end of the novel.

After Jack, Roger and Ralph return from the mountain, where they observed the "beast" first hand in the gloaming and fled in terror, Jack manipulates the situation to his advantage by accusing Ralph of being cowardly and a failure as chief (LF 157). Jack's attempted *coup d'etat* appears to fail when the boys, out of shame, find that they cannot openly vote for a motion of non-confidence in Ralph. And yet they feel drawn to Jack and join him surreptitiously until only Piggy and Ralph remain in the vicinity of the shelters. Knowing with intuitive leadership exactly what will appeal to the hunters, Jack incorporates into his developing theology the dogma that they will not hunt the beast but will leave some of the kill for it so that it will not bother them. In an ensuing post-hunt ritual, the sacrificed sow's head becomes the Lord of the Flies, the central symbol of the novel.

Besides the excitement of the hunt, Jack offers both psychological and theological protection from the "beast." Having



received the commitment of most of the boys, Jack is in a position to convince them that black is white: any explanation which comes from their new chief is accepted as Truth. In a parody of orthodox Christian beliefs, Jack says that the beast came "disguised" as Simon; yet when Simon was killed, the beast was not. Thus he assuages their feeling of guilt over Simon's death. Jack, the former head chorister, has become a high priest.

Nietzsche wrote of "the herd animal": "Incapable of leading itself, it needs a 'shepherd' — the priests understand that. . . . Again it is the priests who exploit this condition and win the 'people' over."<sup>10</sup> In his "Critique of the Herd Virtues," Nietzsche wrote that three of the qualities of the herd are trustfulness, veneration and the sense of truth. "What is true? Where explanation is given which causes us the minimum of spiritual effort."<sup>11</sup> Although we tend to regard Jack as evil, nevertheless he is heroic in that he takes responsibility for his "flock" — to the point that he takes their guilt onto himself. This is a situation parallel to the Grand Inquisitor episode of Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the Grand Inquisitor states that he has taken the burden of guilt for all "Christians" onto his own shoulders. Christ cannot argue with him because the Grand Inquisitor and the church he represents have unquestionably done a heroic thing in removing the burden of free will from the populace. In committing themselves to the rulership of Jack, the boys on the island, Jack's "herd," effectively lose their free will, as well as their individual guilt, in a similar way.



Golding has said that in his opinion there is very little difference between the "evil genius" and the "saint" (TC 38). Earlier he said that the "furthest degree" of rightness on the island is manifest in the person who goes up the mountain to see what there is at the top (TC 14). But two people go up to the top of the mountain alone, and this is a fact that critics have generally ignored. Jack precedes Simon up to the peak to see the "beast" by almost twenty-four hours. He comes back equipped with news supportive of his new religion: "I saw a thing on top. . . . I saw a thing bulge on the mountain" (LF 150). Afraid as he appears to be, he escorts Ralph and Roger back up the mountain to show them the object (LF 152).

Jack's religion answers the immediate theological needs of the "herd" as reason could never do. But Ralph and Piggy are not part of the herd. They attempt to retain what they consider to be the superior virtues of "common sense." Hence they are considered "other," the "exception" which, in Nietzsche's terms, the herd seeks to defend itself against. Since the Lord of the Flies has become "Lord" to the boys, Ralph and Piggy's "denial of the spirit" is regarded as not just a sin: as Nietzsche puts it, "Mistrust is felt towards exceptions; to be an exception is experienced as guilt."<sup>12</sup> When Ralph and Piggy confront Jack and ask him to give Piggy's glasses back, they make the mistake of approaching the grade-three thinkers that constitute Jack's tribe with "an intolerant contempt and incautious mockery" just as the young Golding might have.





Ralph calls Jack "a beast and a swine and a bloody, bloody thief" and his tribesmen "painted fools" (*LF* 219-220), while Piggy calls them all "a crowd of kids" and "a pack of painted niggers" (*LF* 221). Piggy appeals to logic and rules, but Roger, reinforcing the unity of the herd, responds "with a sense of delirious abandonment" (delicious phrase!) by levering a huge boulder on Piggy's head (*LF* 222). Roger's murderous act brings with it "the hangman's horror." Morality flies to the winds as Roger takes over the responsibility of torturing Samneric (*LF* 224). Then the hunt for Ralph is on.

By the end of the novel, we tend to have forgotten that the majority of the hunters, including Jack, were once choir boys in a cathedral. "Each of them wore the remains of a black cap and ages ago they had stood in two demure rows and their voices had been the song of angels" (*LF* 127). The choir boys have become more devils than angels.

The boys' worship of the beast, complete with all its ritual, can be interpreted as a form of nationalism. Golding has said of the beast on the mountain, the "sign" from the adult world that will not lie down, "The flags, the heroism and cruelty are galvanic twitches induced in its slaves and subjects by that hideous, parody thing" (*HG* 94). Since they are motivated by emotion rather than by reason, grade-three thinkers are more susceptible to the beast than are more refined thinkers. Like the grade-three thinkers on the island, grade-three thinkers in the adult world tend to make substantial sacrifices to the symbolic "beasts" they worship.



## II

Of all the characters in *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph is the one whom we could call most "normal." He is the one with whom we are meant to identify, and it is through his eyes that we see most of the developments on the island. A typical "fair-haired boy," he is mild-tempered and fun-loving, agreeable and polite, the sort of boy any parent might be proud of. He is, in fact, the ideal English boy, and except for one or two lapses when he is carried away by emotion or the passion of the hunt, he lives up to our expectations. Even his "lapses" are excusable in that they serve to reinforce our concept of his humanity. Ralph is by no means perfect, but he has a very pleasant personality. Since we most frequently find ourselves looking over his shoulder, as it were, he becomes our touchstone for normalcy.

In all, about two months go by from the time when the boys first land on the island to the end of the novel, little more than an average summer holiday. From the time of the first killing of a pig in Chapter Four to the end of the book (Chapter Twelve) less than a week goes by, a week of destruction during which things deteriorate very rapidly. Up to that point, Ralph manages to keep control only by default: Jack is too preoccupied with his obsession for and frustration in the hunt to challenge Ralph's authority.

Immediately upon finding himself appointed chief, Ralph demonstrates his weakness as a leader by effectively dividing the boys into two camps — the choir, and the rest of the boys. "'The choir belongs to you, of course,'" he tells Jack in a matter-of-fact



way; but this generosity is not a calculated decision so much as a way to placate the choir leader, who has been humiliated by losing the election. It may be true, as Golding has suggested, that by giving Jack authority, he can be made to serve a useful purpose with a minimum of disruption to the society that Ralph leads.<sup>13</sup> But the decision to give him *all* of the choir — that is to say, almost all of the "biguns" — is Ralph's undoing. It is coupled with an admission of weakness in decision-making, which also, however, indicates a determination to apply to his leadership the principles of thought and common sense: "'Listen, everybody. I've got to have time to think things out. I can't decide what to do straight off'" (LF 31). Yet one of the most momentous decisions has already been made without thought! Ralph's lack of confidence is emphasized at the subsequent assembly when "he was uncertain whether to stand up or remain sitting" (LF 42). By force of habit he turns to Piggy for advice, and accepts what Piggy says with the words, "'That's what I was going to say'" (LF 44). This appalling propensity for plagiarism is coupled with an habitual loss of the thread of his argument. Generally speaking, Ralph lacks authority and is inconsistent in his criticism of others (LF 65). With one breath he goads Jack for not getting meat, and "pooh-poohs" Piggy's "useless, footling mention of rescue" (LF 82). With the next, after sighting a ship on the horizon, rescue becomes everything; he ignores the fact that Jack has at last succeeded in bringing home meat, and criticises him for letting the fire out (LF 101).



Up to this point, Ralph has been a proponent of "fun." But his experience with the shelters and now with the fire, his experience, in short, with the unreliability and irresponsibility of the other boys, leads him more and more into thought. He comes to the same conclusion that Golding did when he was a boy, "namely, that I myself could not think at all." Golding wrote in "Thinking As a Hobby" that this realization was the first step towards learning how to think. Ralph contemplates:

The trouble was, if you were a chief you had to think, you had to be wise. And then the occasion slipped by so that you had to grab at a decision. This made you think; because thought was a valuable thing, that got results. . . .

Only, decided Ralph as he faced the chief's seat, I can't think. Not like Piggy (*LF* 97).

It is with the realization that Piggy can think and that he himself cannot think that Ralph reaches, barely, the level of second-grade thought. His speech at the evening assembly is the best he ever gives and marks the peak point in his capacity to think. It is a final desperate attempt to regain control of the boys. Yet it backfires, chiefly because Ralph uses argument based on empirical observation and logical deduction, the type of argument Piggy might use. Ralph's final item of business at the assembly, after he opens the meeting for discussion, leads to another division in the ranks and to an invitation to terror, if only because the grade-three thinkers that constitute the bulk of the boys are not interested in rational thought, and because they perceive fundamental flaws in Ralph's premises: Ralph denies the existence of fear, which is the central





motivating force that all of them experience:

"We've got to talk about this fear and decide there's nothing in it. I'm frightened myself, sometimes; only that's nonsense! Like bogies. Then, when we've decided, we can start again and be careful about things like the fire" (LF 102).

As Ralph has admitted in this rather circular argument, there is such a thing as fear, fear which is impossible to legislate away or to "decide against." What Ralph is trying to convey is the fact that there is no reason for fear unless, as Piggy puts it, the boys become afraid "of people — that is, of each other" (LF 105). The same is true of ghosts. Again Ralph, trying to cope with both the rational and irrational worlds at once, blunders:

"I was wrong to call this assembly so late. We'll have a vote on them; on ghosts I mean . . . . I'll say here and now that I don't believe in ghosts. Or I don't think I do. But I don't like the thought of them. Not now that is, in the dark. But we were going to decide what's what" (LF 112-113).

Having confessed to nervousness and uncertainty, it should not be surprising to Ralph that almost all of the boys except for Piggy claim to believe in the existence of ghosts. But the fact that one cannot decide by majority vote whether ghosts exist entirely escapes him. "The world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away" (LF 113).

The trouble is, Ralph is trying on the hat of rational thought without any preparation or grounding for that thought in his personality — rather like Ruth of Golding's boyhood, who tried to convert him by rational demonstration and statistics. Ralph, like



Ruth, is by nature a grade-three thinker. At one point he says, "I'd like to put on war-paint and be a savage. But we must keep the fire burning'" (LF 175). When he gets a taste of the hunt by sticking his spear into the snout of a charging boar, his entire attitude towards hunting changes: "He sunned himself in their new respect and felt that hunting was good after all" (LF 140). He tries to explain his excitement in a manner almost identical to Jack's initial ecstasy in the hunt. He also leads the hunters in a mock attack on Robert in which he loses self-control:

Ralph, carried away by a sudden thick excitement, grabbed Eric's spear and jabbed at Robert with it.

"Kill him! Kill him!" (LF 142).

Ralph, not Roger or Jack, escalates the play into an earnestness with the words "Kill him!" However much Ralph tries to dismiss his conduct as "just a game" he has inextricably identified himself with the bulk of the boys as controlled by emotion or the passion of the moment rather than by thought, by the Dionysian rather than by the Apollonian. With Ralph, common sense is something unnatural, superimposed on his personality.

By the time Jack has established his own splinter tribe, Ralph's capacity for thought has entirely escaped him. He has come to rely so totally on Piggy's thought that it has become for him a system of belief. From this point on, Ralph no longer argues with his fat companion, even when Piggy says things that are totally absurd. Because Ralph has committed himself to belief in the virtual



infallibility of Piggy's ideas and intelligence, he gets caught in the common trap which ensnares all grade-three thinkers (*LF* 172).

After the ritualistic slaughter of Simon, Ralph is the only boy on the island who appears to experience remorse. He cannot rationalize his blood-guilt away as an accident as can Piggy (*LF* 193). By contrast, Roger and Jack remain coldly self-assured (*LF* 195-99), and find ways of using Simon's murder to theological advantage by holding the other boys in awe. Ralph admits that he was possessed by something over which he had no control, and it is at this point that Ralph also admits that he is frightened, not of the savages alone, but "'Of us'" (*LF* 194). In this, Ralph closely resembles existential man as Sartre conceived of him, a person caught between the "Being-for-itself" (consciousness) and the "Being-in-itself" (the being of a physical "thing").<sup>14</sup> Afraid and mistrustful of his own darker self, Ralph relies more and more on the stability of Piggy's reason and less and less on his own capacity to think. He becomes little more than a mouthpiece for Piggy's ideas, and in this capacity agrees to accompany Piggy in the suicidal mission to Castle Rock. Having relied so heavily on Piggy's reason, when Ralph finds himself alone he fears more than ever becoming a mindless being. He is not allowed time to think, and "there was no Piggy to talk sense." During the chase, he has a growing dread of "the curtain that might waver in his brain. . . making a simpleton out of him" (*LF* 241-43).

It is a mark of Golding's talent that the average reader almost totally identifies with Ralph and finds him a sympathetic





character. But if the average reader sees in Ralph weaknesses that are all too human, might it not be because the average reader, like Ralph, is (in Golding's view at least) a grade-three thinker, who sympathizes with non-logic, with the absence of thought, with the reliance on the ideas of others, the passion, the hypocrisy, the prejudice, and the blind rage and terror which Ralph feels at one time or another? Ralph *tries* to think, *tries* to use his mind, *aspires* to be like Piggy, a second-grade thinker, but only occasionally succeeds. Ralph, in other words, is very much like most of the other boys on the island. The only difference is that he has what he recognizes to be responsibility to protect those under his chieftainship who cannot protect themselves. Therefore, with a simple asceticism, he denies the world of which he is really a part, the world of spirit, forsaking it for an equally mistaken world of half-baked reason, of "*baffled* common sense," in which he parrots Piggy, and never really comes to understand either himself or his own thought processes. If Piggy stands, as Golding intended him to, for a symbol of scientific rationalism and technocracy, then Ralph's "thought" is little more than a simple *belief* in rationalism and technocracy, an irrational faith that the system of thought that Piggy represents and to a degree invents is somehow "true." But Golding's point is that Piggy's system is *not* true, any more than is Jack's; and in many ways, by supporting Piggy Ralph jumps from the frying pan into the fire. For in spite of Piggy's capacity to reason, Golding has said that "Piggy understands society less than



almost anyone there at all" (TC 12).

Ralph does not have the insight to comprehend, as Simon does, that neither Jack's irrational world nor Piggy's rational one is comprehensive enough to account for human behavior. Like Mountjoy of *Free Fall*, Ralph is caught between two worlds, is incapable of living totally in one or the other, and thus is left straddling the gap between—which gradually widens. There is no bridge between the two worlds for him. Simon, who does manage to gain insight into the nature of the two worlds, is largely ignored by Ralph, who considers him "batty." In the final analysis, Ralph sympathizes with the wrong party. He rejects the world of spirit for the world of logic that was never quite in his grasp. In calling Piggy, rather than Simon, a "true, wise friend," Ralph makes the mistake of confusing intelligence with wisdom.<sup>15</sup>

### III

As Ralph realizes, Piggy can think. Compared to any of the other boys on the island, Piggy has the capacity to reach logical conclusions, to make deductions from the empirical data presented to him. Piggy obeys most of the qualities that Golding set down as standards of grade-two thought:

Grade-two thinking is the detection of contradictions. . . . Grade-two thinkers do not stampede easily, though often they fall into the other fault and lag behind. Grade-two thinking is a withdrawal with eyes and ears open. It became my hobby and brought satisfaction and loneliness in either hand. For grade-two thinking destroys without having the power to create (TH 11).



In an interview with Jack Biles, Golding said of Piggy: "He sees roughly what can't be done, what is impossible. He doesn't see what's possible there, much" (*TC* 14). Certainly Piggy is more skilful than the other boys at detecting and pointing out contradictions: that is one reason why Jack hates him so much. Certainly he does not stampede from the opinions and threats of the boys; indeed, he rather brashly confronts them. But he certainly "lags behind" the others with his distorted conception of the power of the conch, and with his essential slothfulness when it comes to doing any manual labour such as gathering firewood. And certainly his kind of thought brings loneliness.

Piggy's initial concern on the island when he meets Ralph on the beach is for the whereabouts of "the man with the megaphone" (*LF* 12) and he is startled to learn that the adult world, with all its scientific apparatus, has deserted them. He is the first boy to make rational deductions regarding the attack, and the crash landing of the passenger tube, from scientific observations (*LF* 13). Furthermore, he suggests a logical, systematic approach to organization: "'I expect we'll want to know all their names,' said the fat boy, 'and make a list. We ought to have a meeting'" (*LF* 16). In a sense he is already drawing up the constitution by which Ralph is to rule the island. His scientific concern for naming or categorization is matched by his seeming lack of feeling and detached attitude towards the news of the nuclear war. When



Ralph tells Piggy that Ralph's father would learn of their whereabouts by inquiring at the airport,

Piggy shook his head, put on his flashing glasses, and looked down at Ralph.

"Not them. Didn't you hear what the pilot said? About the atom bomb. They're all dead" (LF 19-20).

Only when his own welfare is threatened does Piggy become upset, and with his feeling of emotion, his glasses, the symbol of his reliance on technology and reason, become "dimmed with mist": "We may stay here till we die," he says, using a cliché that turns out to be prophetic (LF 20).

Piggy sees the need to find the children, to get their names, to count them, but above all to impose some order. Upon his suggestion, Ralph uses the conch to call the boys, and Piggy takes their names systematically at first as the youngsters appear. But the absence of technology again lets him down; for he has nothing to write the names on. He is not creative enough, as is Simon, to invent a writing material out of bark (LF 35). Piggy is indignant when the children act irrationally and let the fire on the mountain get out of control. He calls them, as does the Naval Officer at the end of the novel, "a pack of kids" and says that they should have constructed shelters before bothering to build a fire. Golding says of Piggy: "He surely shows his complete ignorance of the situation, when he talks about acting like a crowd of kids, just when they are acting like a crowd of grownups" (TC 13).





Piggy is a critic and a scientist rather than a political activist. As Golding has said, "Piggy is a scientist. He is a technocrat. He was meant to be a scientist ":

I would say Piggy ought to wear a white coat — one of these long white lab coats — and ramble round the island, probably writing papers about this, that, or t'other, and ending up at Los Alamos. If I gave him more than that, then I'm glad to see it's one of those cases where Falstaff got out of the situation of being a medieval Vice (TC 14).

In a humourous aside to Jack Biles, Golding imagined Piggy going to college and then going "on to a doctorate, which would inevitably be concerned in some way or other with his experiences on the island" (TC 19). Piggy naively believes that if there is something wrong, it can be put right by the application of scientific principles:

"You have doctors for everything, even the inside of your mind. You don't really mean that we got to be frightened all the time for nothing? Life," said Piggy expansively, "is scientific, that's what it is. In a year or two when the war's over they'll be travelling to Mars and back. I know there isn't no beast — not with claws and all that, I mean — but I know there isn't no fear, either" (LF 105).

Piggy is of course wrong in his assumption that there is no fear, and his double negatives are ironically truer than what he intends to say. The only cause for fear that Piggy sees is "people." Maurice expresses the dilemma of the boys more precisely when he says, "'I don't believe in the beast of course. As Piggy says, life's scientific, but we don't know, do we? Not certainly, I mean — '" (LF 110). Piggy's insight is limited by his commitment



to a system of logic. When Ralph asks him why there are no such things as ghosts and beasts, he replies lamely, "'Cos things wouldn't make sense. Houses an' streets, an' — TV — they wouldn't work'" (LF 115).

In spite of his rationalism the power of the conch is grossly overemphasized by Piggy, who has a morbid, indeed a quasi-religious, concern for its welfare. The conch is the symbol of law and order, of scientific precision and just government — all essential to the welfare of the rationalist philosophy. Without these institutions of the modern world, that rationalist philosophy, with its assumptions of the perfectibility of the social world, could not exist. Their presence constitutes the first premise upon which the rationalist belief is founded. And herein lies the weakness of rationalism as a system of thought: it has its origins outside the realm of logic. The rationalist must make unjustified assumptions about the nature of the world and of the people in it, as Piggy does about the conch and the institutions it symbolizes. Piggy cannot understand that the conch is unimportant to the other boys, who deny the necessity of the stability provided by law and order and democracy that the conch symbolizes. When Jack, Maurice and Robert raid the camp for fire, Piggy's first concern is protection of the conch: "'When I saw Jack I was sure he'd go for the conch. Can't think why,'" he says (LF 175). Later the boys raid the camp for Piggy's glasses and again Piggy, with incredible



naïveté, "thought they wanted the conch" (LF 207). He cannot see beyond the established system represented by the conch. The conch itself represents the premise on which his own system rests.

Piggy's glasses are used by Golding as a symbol to reflect the condition of his mind. As we have seen, when his reason becomes fogged by emotion, his glasses steam up. When Jack steals his glasses, his reason flies to the winds, so that he must rely on a moral request which his philosophical system denies. The last straw which he clutches at is his faith in the power of the conch. Piggy's system denies the ability to discriminate between right and wrong on purely moral grounds. Such decisions, as Golding has stressed, are not a matter of scientific analysis. Yet ultimately the myopic Piggy can only appeal to Jack's morality:

"I'm going to him, with this conch in my hands. I'm going to hold it out. Look, I'm goin' to say, you're stronger than I am and you haven't got asthma. You can see, I'm going to say, and with both eyes. But I don't ask for my glasses back, not as a favour. I don't ask you to be a sport, I'll say, not because you're strong, but because what's right's right. Give me my glasses, I'm going to say — you got to!" (LF 211).

Within the framework of traditional jurisprudence and established moral codes, Piggy is right. But Jack sees no need to comply with Piggy's wishes, since he has denied the values of democracy and all that it implies. Piggy and Jack cannot meet on common ground. While Piggy has insisted on following scientific rationalism,





binding himself helplessly to the remnants of a science-oriented civilization,<sup>16</sup> Jack cares nothing for reason or traditional morality. Even Ralph rejects Piggy's premises, but continues to support Piggy out of a sense of responsibility and respect for the intelligence of his friend. To the last, Piggy acts as prompter to Ralph in the tragic scene on Castle Rock: "'Ralph — remember what we came for. The fire. My specs'" (*LF* 218). Then in a final speech he says, "'Which is better — to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?'" (*LF* 222). As if in answer to Piggy's final question, Roger pries loose a boulder which strikes Piggy, knocking him off the ledge. His head — the seat of his reason — is dashed open on the rocks below.

#### IV

Golding has said that Ralph should have been weeping, not for Piggy, but for Simon, who is the "most right" of all the boys on the island, and the least understood:

There are degrees of rightness- aren't there?  
There is the furthest degree that anybody on the  
island goes, which is to go up the mountain and see  
what there is at the top. That is Simon, who is  
understood by nobody, naturally enough (*TC* 12, 14).

Simon is a mystic, a prophet, a martyr and a saint who is not ashamed or afraid to embrace his fate. He is, as Golding has said elsewhere, a Christ-figure, "solitary, stammering, a lover of mankind, a visionary who reaches commonsense attitudes not by reason but by



intuition" (HG 97-98), a quality he shares with such men as Einstein, Copernicus and Steiner. His powers of thought go beyond those of Piggy into the realm of grade-one thought, the type of thought "which says, 'What is truth?' and sets out to find it" (TH 12).

The difference between Simon and all the rest of the boys in terms of qualities both of "thought" and "faith" can perhaps be demonstrated within the context of attitudes of traditional Christianity. In his *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*, Alan W. Watts commented on contemporary Christian myth and faith, speculating on whether they could survive:

We are compelled to have faith in something which is at once ourselves, in the most basic sense, and not ourselves, in the sense of the ego, the remembered "I". But this faith cannot have any tangible content, such as a system of beliefs, for the simple reason that the fundamental Self cannot be defined. Therefore it is not to be verbalized positively as a believing in or about. It is to be expressed negatively, as a *not* trying to control and to grasp, as a "letting-go" and not as a "holding-to". Furthermore, such "letting-go" faith must come about not as a positive work to be done, but through the realization that there is really nothing else to do, since it is actually impossible to grasp the inmost Self.<sup>17</sup>

We recall that Simon climbed the mountain because "What else is there to do?" (LF 180). He is outside systems of belief, in tune with the fundamental Self, and he has nothing to hold to except his faith in that Self, which in a sense is linked to his own destiny. Simon is unafraid of the darkness on the island. He often feels the need to be alone, and when he prays among the candlebuds, Golding has



said, "he is really turning a part of the jungle into a church, not a physical one, perhaps, but a spiritual one" (*HG* 98). At the end of Chapter Three, the allusion to the paradise in which he walks, and which he alone appreciates for what it is, is unmistakable: "Flower and fruit grew together on the same tree and everywhere was the scent of ripeness" (*LF* 71). When Simon walks deep into the forest to experience nature at its purest, Golding takes pains to focus on every one of the five senses. First we are aware of the "acres of fruit trees" in which "everywhere was the scent of ripeness and the booming of a million bees at pasture." Christlike, he feeds his flocks: "Simon found for the littluns the fruit they could not reach, pulled off the choicest from up in the foliage, passed them back down to the endless outstretched hands" (*LF* 71). The alliteration of the sibilants in this passage is counterpointed with the almost onomatopoeic alliteration of "booming of a million bees," and balanced by the alliteration in "found for them the fruit." By inserting the indirect object between the verb and the direct object, a Biblical solemnity is captured, and this is picked up again when Golding emphasizes the eagerness of the littluns with their "endless outstretched hands," which savours of the multitudes fed by Christ, and is perhaps an allusion to that miracle. Simon then moves away into the jungle where "his feet left prints in the soft soil and the creepers shivered throughout their lengths when he bumped them." Here Golding has shifted from



the senses of taste and smell and sound to the sense of touch. After Simon reaches his hideaway, "he wormed his way into the centre of the mat. The creepers and the bushes were so close that he left his sweat on them and they pulled together behind him" (*LF* 72). Not only do we experience with him the tight squeeze through the bushes, we begin to see the jungle become animated. Whereas two paragraphs before the creepers shuddered in response to Simon's bumping into them, now they pull together behind him of their own volition. Soon, evening itself is personified:

Evening was advancing towards the island; the sounds of the bright fantastic birds, the bee-sounds, even the crying of the gulls that were returning to their roosts among the square rocks, were fainter. The deep sea breaking miles away on the reef made an undertone less perceptible than the susurrations of the blood.

Here Golding uses consonance ("returning to their roosts") and assonance ("deep sea breaking miles away," echoed in "reef" and "made"); and the external sounds, growing gradually fainter as the day fades, are linked to Simon's internal pulse sounds. Then Golding shifts from sound to sight and takes the process of the personification of nature one step further: "The slope of the bars of honey-coloured sunlight decreased; they slid up the bushes, passed over the green candle-like buds, moved up towards the canopy, and darkness thickened under the trees." Finally, he shifts again from the sense of sight to the sense of smell, in his description of the candle-buds opening their flowers to spill their





scent out into the air (*LF* 72). Simon here witnesses a miracle of nature, and through Golding's vivid description and imagination we too are able to experience the miracle of existence which incorporates the temporal blood, the delicate flowers, and the steadfast stars. What is most amazing about this passage of the novel is the fact that Golding had never been to a coral island when he wrote it; the description came straight from his imagination. Golding has remarked, "Writing is not reportage, but imagination. Therefore, I don't think you ever write about what you know about. You write about what you guess about and what you imagine about" (*TC* 16). We begin to understand the process of Golding's informed yet imagined descriptions as they appear in later novels concerned with prehistory, in settings remote from Golding in space and time.

The vision of branches, blossoms and scents experienced by Simon in Golding's powerfully poetic description of the jungle clearing is essentially the same as that experienced by Jocelin after he is humbled enough to see his creation — the spire — in terms of the beauty of that larger Creation which incorporates the appletree bursting with angels and the flash of the kingfisher (*SP* 223). Simon sees similar miracles of perception; he is the only one on the island who appreciates the wonders which the darkness holds when "the candle-buds opened their wide white flowers glimmering under the light that pricked down from the



first stars. Their scent spilled out into the air and took possession of the island" (LF 72). Simon's is a truly universal religion, relying for its light not merely on the sun but on the distant stars. Nonetheless, he is at first associated with formal religion by his initial appearance as a choirboy dressed in a black cloak. It is significant that he is the one who breaks up Jack's neat column by fainting at the moment when Jack is trying to make his best impression (LF 27).

The distinction between Simon's attitude towards religion and that of the others becomes obvious when Simon sees the candle-buds for the first time. He appreciates the marvel of their simple existence, while Jack slashes at them contemptuously with his knife. "'You couldn't light them," says Ralph, and Jack adds, "'We can't eat them'" (LF 40). Their attitudes reflect their concerns, Ralph for fire and light, Jack for food, and Simon for the simple experience of natural religion. Similarly, in the account of their expedition on their return, Ralph informs the other boys that there are food and drink, Jack describes the rocks, while Simon remembers the "blue flowers" (LF 45). The capacity to achieve Paradise, Golding is saying, lies within each individual and depends on his attitudes and perceptiveness. Simon is the only boy on the island who truly appreciates the paradise-like conditions of their new home. The other boys have other interests, and quickly become disillusioned, in spite of initial



enthusiasm, when they experience physical discomfort and political strife. Only Simon can accept the island as it is.

Like Ralph, Simon serves as mediator between Piggy and Jack. He is not intimidated by Jack. He gives Piggy moral support (LF 54) and unselfishly gives him meat when Jack refuses to (LF 92). When the boys detect a ship on the horizon, Simon is the first to notice that the island's fire is out (LF 85). He follows Ralph up the mountain, and *en route* sees Jack and his hunters appear with a dead pig. "What he saw seemed to make him afraid . . . . Piggy snivelled and Simon shushed him quickly as though he had spoken loudly in church" (LF 86). Simon has witnessed — and he is the only boy perceptive enough to comprehend — that Jack and the hunters have committed sacrilege by killing the pig. His intuition informs him that the problem of bloodlust has come to the island. He is concerned that the boys should realize that the beast is "mankind's essential illness", something internal, associated with prejudice, pride and irrational fear such as most of the boys demonstrate: "'What I mean is . . . maybe it's only us'" (LF 110-111).

Simon is the only person who refuses to believe in the physical existence of the beast. After the twins' encounter with the object on the hill, he felt "a flicker of incredulity":

A beast with claws that scratched, that sat on a mountain-top, that left no tracks and yet was not fast enough to catch Samneric. However Simon thought of the beast, there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick (LF 128, 130).





He knows intuitively that the beast is no physical threat, and willingly volunteers to cross the island alone.

Simon uses intuition too when he tells Ralph, "'You'll get back to where you came from'" (*LF* 137-38). The other boys ignore him as "cracked" when he suggests that they should climb the mountain again in daylight, and he can only retreat to the sanctuary of his church; but even that has become polluted by Jack's profane worship. The Lord of the Flies intrudes, with half-shut eyes "dim with the infinite cynicism of adult life." Simon has the alternative of fleeing from Jack's false god; instead his insistence on discovering "What is Truth?" leads him to embrace his fate, and he confronts Beelzebub. Immediately the butterflies, a symbol of innocence and beauty, desert the clearing and the flies — a symbol of evil — take over (*LF* 170). The ensuing dialogue between Simon and the Lord of the Flies marks the crisis of Simon's role as saint and martyr:

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head . . . .  
 "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are as they are?" (*LF* 177).

If Simon came between Jack's hunters and their fun on the island, he would not survive. "We shall do you. See? Jack and Roger and Maurice and Robert and Bill and Piggy and Ralph. Do you. See?" (*LF* 178). The Lord of the Flies as experienced by Simon is the personification of the evil force that lies within all of the



other boys. But Simon is so committed to his quest for Truth that he suppresses fear of reprisal, embraces his fate, and climbs the mountain (*LF* 180). He finds that the flies which swarmed around the pig's head and bothered him have mutilated the airman on the mountain. He recognizes that the "beast" was in fact "harmless and horrible; and the news must reach the others as soon as possible" (*LF* 181).

Had he reached the others, Jack's religion would have had the carpet swept from underneath it, so to speak, and Ralph and Piggy would have been exonerated in their skepticism about the beast. But Simon's final mercy mission is met with degradation and death. "Mistaken" for the beast, he is speared to death by the other boys as he cries out his message to deaf ears. Clearly the beast is contained not in the passive Simon but in the other boys, who, like savage animals ruled by fear, "screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws" (*LF* 188). His intuitive assessment of the situation, that the boys, including Piggy and Ralph, would "do" him — proves correct.<sup>18</sup>

With Simon's death, the rotted parachutist blows free from the mountain and descends into the sea. As the phosphorescent plankton rises with the tide, Simon receives another transmutation or metamorphosis into an angelic being complete with halo as befits a saint:



The water rose further and dressed Simon's coarse hair with brightness. The line of his cheek silvered and the turn of his shoulder became sculptured marble. The strange, attendant creatures, with their fiery eyes and trailing vapours, busied themselves round his head. . . .

Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea (*LF* 190).

Simon has been transformed, but most of the boys that he leaves behind have learned nothing from the seer. Grade-three thinkers, Golding seems to be saying, are unimpressed by genius, just as grade-two thinkers are unimpressed by eccentricity. Even Ralph, while feeling remorse, does not really come to understand the implications of Simon's insight. By describing Simon's destruction in a way to evoke compassion and a touch of tragedy as well as horror, Golding is saying that genius of Simon's kind is never understood or rewarded except perhaps in a cosmic sphere beyond the comprehension of man. He shows his readers a glimpse of heaven, but heaven by implication only. And he asks his readers, Who is the better man — Simon, or any one of the boys who killed him? Ultimately, the reader must decide for himself.

## V

The ending of Golding's first novel incorporated a technique which I shall call "transposed perspective" — the sudden, drastic changing of the reader's point of view. Golding said in an interview that he used this technique to involve his readers



graphically in his own personal view of the world so that the reader could grasp that view and perhaps accept it as valid. He elaborated:

I was trying to say to people, "Now look, I have a view which you haven't got and I would like you to see this from my point of view. Therefore, I must first put it so graphically in my way of thinking that you identify yourself with it, and then at the end I'm going to put you where you are looking at it from outside." 19

This technique is remarkably successful in terms of emotional impact on the reader. In *Lord of the Flies*, the transposition of perspective provided by the sudden adoption of the point of view of the adult naval officer puts us in the position of having to judge objectively the little boys with whom we have so completely identified. Furthermore, the officer's timely arrival, blatantly coincidental as it is, can be justified when viewed in terms of a *deus ex machina* device which saves us from witnessing the brutal murder and cannibalization of Ralph that is implicitly hinted in Roger's sharpening of both ends of the spear. In this respect, Golding's use of the *deus ex machina* is very close to Euripides'. Moses Hadas has written that the device "is not only a key to Euripides' techniques but also an important clue to Euripides' temper and objectives":

Euripides is providing alternative conclusions. The probable but unstated ending would produce real tragedy and heighten the impact of the lesson Euripides aims to teach; the conclusion superimposed by the *deus ex machina* jibes with





the traditional myth, often supplies the etiology for some religious usage, and provides a happy ending . . . . What Euripides seems to be saying is, "Here is your happy ending if you want it, but I hope you don't take it; when you see the *deus ex machina* appear you can gather your wraps and start moving to the exit."<sup>20</sup>

Golding has admitted that the arrival of the naval officer "is very much in the tradition of the Euripidean *deus ex machina*."<sup>21</sup> In fact, the device appears in disguised form in most of Golding's novels and each time provides "alternative conclusions" to what actually happens. The reader is forced at the end of each novel to identify with the god-figure to take a new, objective look at the consciousness that he has hitherto inhabited; we ourselves become "*dei*". But to make the final transposition carry full impact, Golding first had to involve his reader with the protagonist so that the sudden severance with the protagonist would shock the reader profoundly. Golding remarks, "The writer has to say, 'I am trying to say something important, and if I have to fool this man in order to hit him in the belly at the right moment, I will do this'" (TC 67). The blow in the belly comes at the moment when the reader is forced to adopt a new, objective perspective. In effect, Golding is saying to the reader, "Up to now, you've been a little boy. Now you're God. Judge."

Indeed, it is well that Golding should remind us of what exactly we have witnessed occurring on the island. As *Lord of the Flies* progresses we soon forget that Ralph is a little boy of



twelve, and Jack hardly any older: they both seem so adult. Just as Simon becomes a Christ figure, so Jack emerges as the satanic embodiment of evil, and Ralph, in his flight from the devilish savages, from Satan/Jack with his furies and hellfire and red hair, becomes the personification of Fear: in the final, desperate seconds of his life, he falls in the sand and, like Simon, crouches "with arm up to ward off, trying to cry for mercy" (LF 245-246). If we adopt Hadas' view of Euripides' use of *deus ex machina*, no mercy is forthcoming. But Golding's "god" appears: the naval officer is a manifestation of the adult world for which the boys (or some of them at least) have been praying since they landed on the island. Golding has emphasized that from the point of view of children, adults are gods: "It's the master who gets the right boy by the scruff of the neck and hauls him back. He is God who stops a murder being committed."<sup>22</sup>

The arrival of the naval officer gives the sudden punch in the belly to the reader that Golding has been waiting to give — the shock of a totally new perspective. All through the novel we have adopted more or less consistently a child's-eye view, the point of view of Ralph. But we have become so accustomed to that view that we have forgotten that the boys are in fact children. The naval officer, in an interior monologue, serves to remind us:

The officer inspected the little scarecrow in front of him. The kid needed a bath, a hair-cut, a nose-wipe and a good deal of ointment . . . .



Other boys were appearing now, tiny tots  
some of them, brown, with the distended bellies  
of small savages (*LF* 247).

The demoniac Jack has become "a little boy who wore the remains  
of an extraordinary black cap on his red hair."

Dressed impeccably in white drill, the naval officer is  
a grown up Ralph. He too fulfils the traditional values and ideals  
of the British Empire. The naval officer is Lord Jim, standing  
yards higher than the brown and battered savages that surround  
him. He expresses distaste that "a pack of British boys" should  
not have "put up a better show than that." Yet he himself with  
his uniform and gunboat is involved in an even more atrocious war  
that is taking place in the macrocosm. Says Golding, "Remember  
that the officer is in many ways no different from the boys who  
turned hunters. He, too, is corrupt. He, too, is hunting, but he  
really doesn't know it."<sup>23</sup> He asks us, simply, "And who will  
rescue the naval officer?"

Golding succeeds in heightening suspense through the  
technique of foreshadowing. Several bizarre incidents that occur  
early in the novel are melded or repeated in the last chapter so  
that the reader's memory is jogged again and again. By the end  
of the first chapter, for example, Jack has already had a trial  
run at pushing murderous boulders down the mountain (*LF* 37).  
Jack's attempt to kill the pig in the first chapter is also  
prophetic. So is the huge fire that blazes out of control killing





one boy; it foreshadows the final blaze that the boys set in their hunt for Ralph. The stick sharpened at both ends upon which the pig's head is impaled has especial significance at the end when the boys close in on Ralph with an identical weapon.

One asset that Golding used very well in depicting conflict and tension in *Lord of the Flies*, perhaps balancing his absence of experience of a genuine tropical island, was his familiarity with the juvenile temperament and language stemming from his experience as a school teacher. All of the boys on the island, from the tiny, cringing Percival Wemys Madison to the self-assured Jack, are exceedingly credible. All of them are types that can be seen in almost any English school yard. And Golding depicts the boys manipulating each other just as schoolboys might — through threats and mockery, through exaggerated politeness and dares. Jack is a master of manipulation of the most sinister kind. He knows that his exaggerated apology for having let the fire go out (for example) will throw Ralph off guard. He is equally cunning in his challenge to Ralph when they contemplate looking for the beast (LF 148). Ralph's "automatic pilot" takes over when he answers Jack's challenge with a cool and casual "I don't mind." But this is the only defense against charges of cowardice at a very critical time for Ralph's leadership. Golding's humour is at its best when two avowed enemies such as Ralph and Jack exchange civilities:



"If you don't mind, of course."

"Oh, not at all" (LF 148).

Golding's talents as a novelist in *Lord of the Flies* lie in his ability to tell a "thumping good tale" (as he has called stories by other writers), in his art in making nature come to life by appealing to all the senses, in his skill in presenting highly defined verbal portraits of people using a very few well-placed words, in his realistic portrayal of change within his characters, in his use of association to heighten tension, and in his precise handling of dialogue that conveys convincing personality quirks and conflict situations common to everyday experience. To these might be added his capacity to capture the consciousness of his protagonists in indelible glimpses that help us envision the characters for what they are.

*Lord of the Flies* is the most exciting of Golding's novels, and probably the richest in symbolism, imagery, and levels of meaning. Here we have human beings interacting with each other, albeit in an artificial "control" situation, such as we experience nowhere else in his work. In almost all of the other novels we are presented with central protagonists who are very much set apart from their fellows: Christopher in *Pincher Martin*, Sammy in *Free Fall*, Jocelin in *The Spire* and Oliver in *The Pyramid*. Each of these novels portrays the world as it affects and is perceived by the protagonist. The other novels, *The Inheritors*, "The Scorpion



God," "Clonk Clonk," and "Envoy Extraordinary," are in a science fiction mode that looks back through time rather than ahead. And it is to these, especially to *The Inheritors*, that *Lord of the Flies* is most closely related.



### CHAPTER THREE: THE INHERITORS

#### I

Of all his novels Golding considers *The Inheritors* to be both his favourite and his best.<sup>1</sup> It is somewhat surprising, then, that his second novel has been virtually ignored by critics. Only four articles have been written specifically about *The Inheritors*. One of these was an "introduction" to the educational edition,<sup>2</sup> another was a highly technical analysis of Golding's language and style,<sup>3</sup> a third compared the plot with that of Vardis Fisher's *The Golden Rooms*,<sup>4</sup> and the fourth dealt with Golding's use of irony.<sup>5</sup> The best critical analyses of *The Inheritors* are contained in general works on Golding.

Most early reviewers of *The Inheritors* were impatient with Golding's style and theme and treated the novel as little more than a speculative and highly inaccurate study of Neanderthal Man. The early literary criticism was more concerned with tracing sources and analysing the obvious allegory of the Fall than with what Golding was trying to say. Most of these early critics would be shocked to discover that Golding added the primary imagery of the Fall — the waterfall — only in the last draught. Ralph Freedman was the first to suggest that the Neanderthals do not "fall" at all, that they are incapable of guilt and remain totally





innocent to the end, a foil for the guilt-ridden modern men.<sup>6</sup> Arthur Broes, who also interpreted *The Inheritors* in terms of allegory, pointed out that the Cro-Magnons were not totally evil since they were capable of love.<sup>7</sup> Samuel Hynes, who called *The Inheritors* "Golding's most brilliant *tour de force*," analysed Golding's technique of providing the reader with data through the perceptions of Neanderthals so that we ourselves are forced to interpret the data in terms of our own fallen behavior. He also emphasized the difference between the religions of the two tribes — the natural, procreative, female-oriented religion of the Neanderthals and the unnatural, destructive, male-oriented religion of the inheritors.<sup>8</sup> It was not until Bernard Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub's *The Art of William Golding* was released ten years after the publication of *The Inheritors* that critical thinking on the novel strengthened. Oldsey and Weintraub discussed at length the sources of *The Inheritors* in Wells, Conrad and Hueffer, and tried to show that Golding's Neanderthals lack not knowledge, but education. They elaborated on the female and male manifestations of religion and pointed out that the Neanderthals show "a considerable understanding of taboo and guilt" which serves to heighten our view of their innocence.<sup>9</sup>

In 1967, Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor's *William Golding: A Critical Study* shifted the emphasis of critical interpretation of *The Inheritors* to its technique. Conceding that the



novel could be read on many levels including "literary archaeology, science fiction or a fable about the Fall," they went on to show that the novel was primarily one of discovery — discovery on the part of the Neanderthals, the Cro-Magnons, the reader and the author himself. They drew the distinction between the group experience of the Neanderthals and the individual experience of the Cro-Magnons. They also indicated the limitation of the Neanderthal capacity for reason: the fact that the protomen have no concept of "therefore" in logical argument, but can only superimpose one picture over another. They viewed the conservatism of the Old Woman as a telling characteristic of innocence: Fa's invention of horticultural techniques is dismissed by the Old Woman as "a new thing" — and therefore not a good thing. According to Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, the Neanderthals are incapable of change and even their imitations of the behavior of the New Man are performed out of a terrified admiration for their craft. Lok remains "quite incapable" of understanding the religious attitudes that lie behind blood sacrifice and ritual killing. The New Men, on the other hand, not only inherit the earth, but also inherit "a new vision" — grasped at first only by Tuami.<sup>10</sup>

Howard S. Babb, in his *The Novels of William Golding*, treated the "narrative art" of *The Inheritors*, made some interesting observations about the names of the characters, and indicated that "the fundamental informing structure of *The Inheritors* is the series of contrasts that Golding develops between the Neanderthal people and the new men." According to Babb, the Neanderthals live



on after their death — in the memory and terrified imagination of the New People.<sup>11</sup>

Since the intelligence of the Neanderthals is far below that of the modern men, their thought is often hardly recognizable as such; but when the Neanderthals are considered in relation to each other, the rudiments of Golding's three grades of thought are clearly discernible. Collectively, the mutuality and love that seems to be exhibited by the Neanderthals at the beginning of the novel can be interpreted as something akin to grade-one thought, as we shall see. But when the Neanderthals are considered as individuals, their clinging together, and their clinging to tradition that is not viable, is more like grade-three thought. Like a "herd of cows", they blindly follow Mal back to their summer retreat much too early. None of the Neanderthals thinks for himself; all rely on the senile Mal to make the decisions for them. Mal is considered to be infallible. Even when they see the ice clinging thickly to the cliffside as mute testimony to the earliness of their return, they do not doubt Mal's judgement (*IN* 28). Only when he makes some obvious slips do the people begin to feel uneasy. First he counts little Liku as an adult and leaves out Lok (*IN* 36). Then he sends the best food gatherer, Ha, to fetch wood, along with Nil who is burdened with the new one. Finally, he sends Liku with Lok and Fa to fetch food, the most hazardous occupation. In spite of Ha's protestations, Mal insists that





since he has spoken, his word is unchangeable.

The most typical grade-three thinker among the Neanderthals is the old woman. She above anyone else is determined to retain traditional order, and she does so by shunning anything new. A new idea, especially one stemming from a woman, is against the theological principles of the old woman. Her rule, "A woman for Oa and a man for the pictures in his head" is not based on reason, but on a type of "off-campus history", inaccurate and unjustified when applied, for example, to Lok who has no pictures, and to Fa, who has many. When Mal is nearly dead and Ha is missing, the mantle of responsibility falls to Lok, and the old woman rebukes both Nil and Fa when they try to offer suggestions (*IN* 70, 94-95). Yet the old woman's criticism of Fa and Nil is to a degree hypocritical, for she herself directs Lok and speaks for him: "'Lok will not want Liku to go. There is no man. Let Fa and Lok go. This is what Lok says'" (*IN* 96).<sup>12</sup> Although she recognizes that Lok has no pictures, she insists that he should be the source of inspiration and leadership for the group — and insists in her blind prejudice that Fa keep her pictures to herself.

Once Lok is forced to think and act for himself, he becomes a parody of a grade-two thinker, who makes logical deductions without sufficient premises. Just as the grade-two thinker refuses to consider irrational or inexplicable events as "real", so Lok refuses to believe that the new people are as



totally irrational and cruel as they prove themselves to be. Even before he comes in direct contact with the new people, he is skeptical of anything that he does not understand, and anything that he has not observed with his own senses. He cannot conceive of a hypothetical situation and laughs at almost all of Fa's creative suggestions. At first, he is capable of making only the most simple deductions, and recognizes his own limitations: "He wished he could ask Mal what it was that joined a picture to a picture so that the last of the many came out of the first" (*IN* 96). The deductions he does make lack exactly the ingredient that all grade-two thinkers lack, the realization that not all things are rational or observable. Lok watches passively as one of the new people shoots an arrow at him, narrowly missing his head (*IN* 106). In a parody of a rationalist point of view, he concludes that the poisoned arrow is a gift (*IN* 111, 112). From such a point of view, his conclusion might seem justified, but it shows a gross ignorance of the nature of the people with whom he is dealing — an ignorance parallel to that of Piggy when the boy decides to ask for the return of his glasses. Only when Fa adds another premise to Lok's argument by reminding him that they throw rocks at hyaenas are Lok's suspicions as to the new people's intentions aroused (*IN* 119). Even when he senses that the new people are dangerous, he cannot believe what his senses tell him. He suppresses what he instinctively feels — that the new people



are dangerous like a cat or bear. True, he experiences fear which, judging from the cries of Liku, proves justified: "She was not screaming in anger or in fear or in pain, but screaming with that mindless and dreadful panic she might have shown at the slow advance of a snake" (*IN* 106). Having witnessed her abduction and the mutilated body of the old woman, he has good reason to fear the new people, but he is so fascinated by them that he persists in ignoring or forgetting that fear. Even when Fa describes the slaughter of the old woman and Nil, Lok retains a proto-rationalist's naive optimism in the inherent goodness of the new people: "When the new people bring Liku back I shall be glad" (*IN* 133). Again we are reminded of Piggy's optimism that Jack will do "what's right" in spite of the fact that Piggy has witnessed Jack repeatedly do "wrong."

Lok, in his innocence, can state observations, but cannot cope with the complexity of moral judgements. The new people are riddled with feelings of guilt, and anyone devoid of guilt, anyone outside the religious system that engenders the superstition experienced and believed by the new people, is incapable of understanding guilt, or even of recognizing its existence. Lok's incorrect premise is the faith held as a credo by all rationalists that "people understand each other" (*IN* 72). His belief that the new people will give back Liku is just as naive as Piggy's belief that Jack will give back his glasses. In both cases, the



rationalist faith leads to downfall. Lok's insistence on relying on his own empirically-acquired knowledge is destructive in the sense that every decision he makes on his own defeats Fa's attempts to save the children and leads the Neanderthal band further down the trail to oblivion.

Lok's perceptions are described in terms of natural phenomena, and although Lok does not consciously learn the use of simile until late in the novel he perceives new things in metaphorical terms, linking them with things that he already knows. Hence when he first hears the new people, "The sounds made a picture in his head of interlacing shapes, thin, and complex, voluble and silly, not like the long curve of a hawk's cry, but tangled like line weed on the beach after a storm, muddled as water" (*IN* 104). Although he *feels* this, he is unable himself to communicate it. The language of the Neanderthals is comparatively simple, with no contractions: "With the scent of other I am other. I creep like a cat. I am frightened and greedy. I am strong" (*IN* 97). The most powerful descriptions in the novel are those passages of narration that are removed from Lok's perceptions. Yet even here Golding focuses on the living force of nature personified: "Here the bones of the island showed, lumps of smooth grey rock" (*IN* 22). "There was an island in the river which extended up as though one part had been stood on end and leaned against the fall" (*IN* 23). "The sun dropped into the





river and light left the overhang" (IN 33). Yet Golding does not use his vocabulary sparingly when describing Lok's consciousness in relation to the complexity of his situation: "A kind of half-knowledge, terrible in its very formlessness, filtered into Lok as though he were sharing a picture with her but had no eyes inside his head and could not see. The knowledge was something like that sense of the extreme peril that outside-Lok had shared with her earlier" (IN 173).

This blending of poetic prose ("terrible in its very formlessness") with Lok's own limited powers of expression ("but had no eyes inside his head") is usually effective. Only occasionally does it obtrude: "The smell was like the new people, it repelled and attracted, *it daunted and enticed*" (IN 181). Again, when Lok begins to use simile, he realizes that "Likeness could grasp the white-faced hunters with a hand, could put them into the world where they were thinkable and not a *random and unrelated irruption*. He was picturing the hunters who went out with bent sticks in *skill and malice*" (IN 194). Golding's own vocabulary is inserted so subtly that the reader accepts the narration as credible, even though he is "seeing" through the limited perceptions of Lok.

At first, the Neanderthals share a balanced world view that incorporates intuitive insight and extra-sensory perception. They are linked together by shared feelings and "pictures" (IN 34).



Even the old woman is described as "close to Oa, knowing so indescribably much, the doorkeeper to whom all secrets were open" (IN 61). The faith of the Neanderthals in Oa is movingly attested to by Lok:

Oa had waited for them. Even now she was pushing up the spikes of the bulbs, fattening the grubs, reeking the smells out of the earth, bulging the fat buds out of every crevice and bough. He danced on to the terrace by the river his arms spread wide.

"Oa!" (IN 31-32).

Their simple mythology is outlined by Mal: "'There was the great Oa. She brought forth the earth from her belly. She gave suck. The earth brought forth woman and the woman brought forth the first man out of her belly'". Even Oa's powers seem a little tarnished, however, compared with the powers that she used to have when "it was summer all year round and flowers and fruit hung on the same branch" before the forest fire drove the band into isolation (IN 35). This image of paradise is identical to that experienced by Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, and the personification of nature implicit in the concept of Oa is close to Golding's own descriptive technique of giving the forces of nature attributes of personality. When Fa and Lok visit the ice women they enter a natural cathedral. Golding describes its awesome size and artistry in terms of natural creation:

"The place was huge and open. It was walled with rock; and everywhere the ice ivy-plants reached upwards until they were spread out high above his



head on the rock. Where they met the floor of the sanctuary they swelled till they were like the boles of old oaks. Their high branches vanished in caverns of ice" (*IN* 83).

Again the cold ice comes to life through simile. Fa prays to Oa, her voice echoing eerily, and Lok experiences the terror of an intruder in an awesome church.

In spite of these intimations of collective innocence, only Fa succeeds as an individual in reaching grade-one thought — no meagre accomplishment considering the limitations both of her intelligence and the world-view under which she has been brought up. She has been raised to believe in the natural inferiority of the imagination and intelligence of women, a dogma that she most expressly rejects. In fact, Fa can be viewed as one of the earliest of woman liberators. She is, furthermore, a truly tragic hero. From the beginning she is a peacekeeper in the band; when Lok and Ha verge on a fight, she cleverly mediates the dispute (*IN* 38). She is perceptive enough to recognize that Mal is incapable of leading them (*IN* 46), and proves herself a keen innovator, in spite of the fact that "a new thing" is frowned on by her peers — just as Copernicus' "new thing" was frowned on by his. She tries to communicate to Lok the value of transplanting a patch of asparagus-like shoots to the vicinity of the cave (*IN* 49) and tries to relay to the rest of the band how they could use a container to carry water to Mal (*IN* 62-63). She literally engineers a plan for taking food to Liku when she constructs a crude bridge of logs





across the raging river to the island at the top of the waterfall. It is Fa who enters the temple of the ice women and who continues to revere reason, ideas, and Oa. Afraid of an avalanche, understanding the danger of entering ice caverns, she warns Lok to be quiet (IN 81). . . . She gives a simple offering to Oa and whispers in the huge, echoing cavern a plea for Mal's health. Fa here takes the place of Simon in *Lord of the Flies* who felt so at home in the towering temple of trees in the middle of his garden in the jungle.

Besides this mixture of faith, intuition, insight and reason, Fa has the capacity to speculate beyond the strictures of the mythology surrounding Oa (IN 85, 94-95). Like Simon, she recognizes the need for communication with the source of evil: "'Find the other, Lok, and speak to him'" (IN 98). When communication fails, and Lok and Fa are left alone, she refutes entirely the concept that men have more pictures than women. When Lok repeats the old woman's dictum, "Her fingers tightened on his flesh. Her face looked as though she hated him." She snaps, "'Lok has no pictures in his head. . . . I have many pictures.'" She is deeply relieved when Lok obeys her: "She was laughing and sobbing and shaking as though she had done something difficult but very good" (IN 118). She has in fact destroyed an invalid myth, and replaces it by her own example. Their capacity for salvation lies in Lok's obedience to her superior intelligence, and had he followed her instead of blundering along on his own,



they would have escaped to safety. She perceives the extent of the unpredictability of the new people, and suggests running away to the sea to start a new life.

Fa's one weakness is the same as Simon's -- her inability to communicate in spite of her desire to do so. If she had been able to describe the horrors of Liku's murder, Lok would not have kept insisting on finding Liku after she was dead. Fa's horror can only be suffered alone, and with the love and compassion of a mother she prevents Lok from witnessing the slaughter (*IN* 169). With quivering lips she says of the new people, "Oa did not bring them out of her belly" (*IN* 173). When Lok still harps on about recovering Liku, "She opened her mouth to speak but no sound came out" (*IN* 199).

The final showdown between the two peoples is again engineered by Fa, and again foiled by Lok's stupidity. Her plan is to create a distraction so that the armed men would chase her, leaving Lok free to grab the new one from Vivani. But Lok is so concerned about Liku that he completely overlooks the new one, whom he could have taken with ease. Once the new people are alerted, they fight in furious terror. Lok trips over a leather thong and one of the two canoes crashes down into the forest, splitting apart on the rocks. Chestnut Head loses his life in the fracas and as the new people chop through the dam that Fa had made, Tuami and Marlan, against the pleas of Twal, try to sacrifice



Tanakil to the "devils". In her last act of good will, parallel to Simon's attempt to "free" the boys from their own fears, Fa orders the release of Tanakil. Marlan throws something at Fa that stuns her momentarily and the saintly woman, pinned to a huge tree bursting with cascades of buds, is borne over the waterfall to her death.

## II

The New People emerge only slowly into Lok's consciousness and thus into ours. But Lok's initial dream of the "other" proves to be prophetic:

Lok was running. The scent of the other was pursuing him and he could not get away. It was night and the scent had paws and a cat's teeth. He was on the island where he had never been. The fall roared by on either side. He was running along the bank, knowing that presently he would drop from exhaustion and the other would have him. He fell and there was an eternity of struggle (*IN* 93).

His deeply felt fear, which he quickly dismisses in his conscious existence, is a result of subconscious observations. He refuses to accept what he has observed, or at least deliberately misinterprets it, because he cannot conceive of a people so controlled by irrational impulse; but the truth of Lok's dream, the truth of the intuitive knowledge that he consciously rejects, is quickly confirmed by the subsequent actions of the new people.



Most of the new people are grade-three thinkers who exhibit a form of racial prejudice: motivated by irrational fear and superstition, they kill the adult Neanderthals. They never attempt to communicate with them because they regard them as "devils" (IN 228). Rather, they project their own personalities onto the Neanderthals. Were the new people invaded by a strange tribe they would fight; since they are in the position of the invaders, they expect to be attacked — just as Jack and his hunters expected to be "attacked" by Piggy and Ralph and accordingly constructed a formidable fortress. Ha's actions on the cliffside are interpreted as the first attack, and the attempt by Lok and Fa to supply meat for Liku as the second. That the Neanderthals are unarmed and inflict no damage is quite irrelevant: the terror that the new people experience is no less real (IN 129). But their terror is based on unjustified prejudice that, while characteristic of the new people, is alien to the Neanderthals: although Lok sees the new people as "incomprehensibly strange" and is momentarily shocked, he accepts the physical difference of the newcomers without prejudice and regards them, not as devils, but as "people" (IN 137, 139). By contrast, the Neanderthals would never be accepted as "people" by the newcomers.

Communication between the Neanderthals and the inheritors reaches its peak when Liku and Tanakil share a meal of fungus. Tanakil is as yet relatively unpolluted by the encroachments of





grade-three thought, "off-campus history" and adult irrationality, and in her innocence is able to accept Liku not as a pet monkey or curiosity piece but as a fellow human playmate (IN 153-54). The innocent Tanakil understands Liku's love for the image of Oa and builds a doll's house for it out of twigs and hide. Then the children communicate verbally by exchanging names (IN 156). Their friendship falters only after Tanakil's crumple-faced mother, Twal, steeped as she is in years of prejudice, "off-campus history" and grade-three thought, reacts violently and irrationally when Tanakil tries to eat some fungus that tradition dictates is poisonous but which Liku demonstrates is safe to eat:

The crumpled woman screamed so that Liku fell over. The crumpled woman struck Tanakil's shoulder fiercely, screaming and shouting. Tanakil quickly put her hand to her mouth and pulled the fungus out. The woman smacked it out of her hand so that it fell in the river. She screamed at Liku who bolted back to the tree. The woman bent down to her, keeping out of reach and made fierce noises at her.

"Ah!" she said. "Ah!" (IN 157).

The prejudice and irrational fear of the unknown exhibited here — parallel to that of the old Neanderthal woman — stems from the learning process passed on from mother to daughter. After the old woman's tirade, the beautifully developing, innocent relationship between Liku and Tanakil can never again be the same. When they meet again, Tanakil, having learned a new prejudice from the adult world, assumes her superiority, leads Liku by the



wrist or leash like a puppy and screams and beats Liku when she fails to comply with her wishes (*IN* 167). Twal has exhibited all the irrational prejudice and lack of understanding that characterizes the bulk of her species, and her hypocrisy is demonstrated, like that of the old woman, by her returning to Liku shortly afterwards to coax her to repeat Tanakil's name (*IN* 157).

Tanakil's mother is the epitome of grade-three thinkers. But with their rituals, dances, arguments and drunken bouts, the other new people prove themselves to be little better. They experience heights of passion never attained by the Neanderthals. When Lok comes face to face with a new man for the first time, the man suffers agonies of terror:

The man's head turned to Lok and he could see that his eyes were staring wide open, staring at nothing, turning with the head like the eyes of the old woman in the water. They looked through him and the fear contracted on his skin. The man was jerking his body higher and higher, the words had become a series of croaks that grew louder and louder. There was a noise coming from one of the other huts, the shrill chatter of women and then a terrified screech (*IN* 183-84).

All this, simply because a Neanderthal stuck his nose inside a tent! As Lok and Fa flee, the screaming, shouting throng of irrational men feebly shoot their arrows into the darkness and then prepare to portage their dugouts up the mountain to the lake above the falls, leaving behind propitiatory gifts to appease the "devils" (*IN* 199).



The Neanderthals are not intelligent enough to pinpoint the evil that the new people have brought. "'The people are like a famished wolf in the hollow of a tree,'" says Lok as he experiments with similes for the first time (IN 195).<sup>13</sup> Golding gives Fa a keener insight into the personality of the inheritors: "'The new people are frightened,'" she says. "'They stand and move like people who are frightened. They heave and sweat and watch the forest over their backs. But there is no danger in the forest. They are frightened of the air where there is nothing'" (IN 206). Lok also notices their fear:

There was a hysterical speed in the efforts of Tuami and in the screaming voice of the old man. They were retreating up the slope as though cats with their evil teeth were after them, as though the river itself were flowing uphill. Yet the river stayed in its bed and the slope was bare of all but the new people.

"They are frightened of the air" (IN 209).

The Neanderthals are scapegoats for the new people, and as the new people leave, the darkness extends all around them and takes the blame as the haunt of the "devils". "'They live in the darkness under the trees,'" says Marlan after he hears the sound of the avalanche crashing into the river in the distance. Peer as Tuami might, "he could not see if the line of darkness had an ending" (IN 233).

If most of the new people appear to be irrational, third-grade thinkers, Tuami the artist stands apart from the others as





a cynical critic of their conduct. During the raid on the overhang, he was responsible for saving the lives of the new one and Liku. He is popular, but his contempt for Marlan shows through when he works on his ivory knife with which he intends to kill Marlan (IN 148-49). When the other new people plead with Marlan for some wine, Tuami alone refuses to join the mob: he stands "to one side as though he were of a different people" (IN 158). Later when they fight over the wineskin, "Tuami stood by the struggle watching as though the people were something he had drawn in the air with his stick" (IN 166). He appears to be as cynical as had been the young Golding when as a grade-two thinker he sneered at Londoners cheering the King and asked the cause of their irrational excitement. Tuami has no part in the killing of Liku, but instead watches the old man's back, possibly contemplating the most suitable spot to stab him (IN 168). He uses his hatred for Marlan as an excuse to cuckold him (IN 176-77), and in this resembles other grade-two thinkers of later novels — notably Christopher Martin, Sammy Mountjoy and Oliver. In spite of his apparent cynicism, Tuami, motivated in part by a fear that he does not understand, proves to be not only an excellent artist, but an extraordinary engineer. He uses rollers and an ingenious elevator device to portage the canoes. His invention of the counterweight so that boulders can do the work of lifting the boats is an example of growing technology that is associated with reason and science. Marlan's magic has



failed to work for the new people — Tuami's brains effect their escape over the falls. Tuami becomes a primitive technocrat.

And yet he is more than this. He has learned something else from his experience with the "devils" — indeed all of the new people have. In the final scene, Tuami sits at the helm of the dugout and contemplates dejectedly the initial irrationality of the tribe that brought them to this hostile world:

"What a fool Marlan was, at his age, to have run off with [Vivani] for her great heart and wit, her laughter and her white, incredible body! And what fools we were to come with him, forced by his magic, or at any rate forced by some compulsion there are no words for!" (IN 226).

Realizing now the inefficacy of Marlan's "magic", Tuami renews his pledge to stab the chief. Like Piggy and Ralph in their rueful analysis of Simon's murder, Tuami thinks up a rationalistic justification for their sacrifice of Liku which parallels Lok's rationalization for taking the doe meat: "If we had not we should have died" (IN 228).

Tuami's progression from grade-two thought to grade-one is symbolized by his attitude towards his knife. At first he is controlled by "lust and hate" and wishes to kill Marlan. But with the confused sands swirling in his mind, his sense of purpose gradually dissipates and "He worked unhappily at the blade of his dagger and did not care whether he finished it or not but it was something to do" (IN 230). When Vivani nurses the "little devil",



the people including Tuami accept the strange creature with "a well of feeling in love and fear" (*IN* 231). The devil is no longer an "it" as Lok was after Fa was killed, but even to the new people has become a "he". The people make "adoring and submissive sounds" to the devil and reach out to him. The idea of the little boy as a devil is gradually dissipated until he becomes in Tuami's mind more a brat than a devil, and Tuami, with his grade-two concern for rationalistic problems contemplates what will happen to the new one when he grows up.

Suddenly, Tuami sees Marlan taking on the shape of a Neanderthal, the shape of the devil that he drew in the cave just before he fled: "The sun was blazing on the red sail and Marlan was red. His arms and legs were contracted, his hair stood out and his beard, his teeth were wolf's teeth and his eyes like blind stones" (*IN* 229). With this vision, he comes to see the "devils" as what they were — projections of his own fallen mind. And now, he realizes, Marlan has taken their place. Only then can Tuami ask himself regarding the knife, "What was the use of sharpening it against a man? Who would sharpen a point against the darkness of the world?"

After the "ice women" crash in a stupendous avalanche behind them, the boat comes to a momentary standstill and the terrified "devil brat", no longer a six-legged monster to be afraid of, clambers to the safety of Vivani's hood. The little devil



proves harmless and amusing, and in a sudden gust of relief, Tuami drops the knife. And then, in a flash of insight, he sees how the frightened little boy and Vivani — the world of spirit and the world of flesh — fit together, the boy's rump pressing against the nape of the woman's neck. Then it is that the artist reaches "the overriding human necessity of finding a link between separate phenomena" that Golding referred to in his essay on Copernicus. Tuami's artistic genius creates the link between the two peoples. Golding elaborated on the necessity of cosmic unity in an interview with Jack Biles: "The whole thing surely *has to be* a unity. And it seems to me that man hasn't seen this" (TC 77). In Golding's view, Copernicus saw it. Einstein saw it. Tuami, too, sees it, and sees the artistic need to capture it in the ivory of the haft of his knife:

The rump and the head fitted each other and made a shape you could feel with your hands. They were waiting in the rough ivory of the knife-haft that was so much more important than the blade. They were an answer, the frightened, angry love of the woman and the ridiculous, intimidating rump that was wagging at her head, they were a password. His hands felt for the ivory in the bilges and he could feel in his fingers how Vivani and her devil fitted in (IN 233).<sup>14</sup>

Looking off into the future, Tuami's eyes are dazzled by the light off the lake immediately surrounding him: he cannot see if the darkness ends or not. But it no longer matters. His new vision and creative urge is like light in the midst of darkness. Tuami





has reached a deeper plane of understanding; with his final vision of the unity of things, he reaches the creative level of genuine first-grade thought.

The haft of Tuami's knife depicts the vivacious Vivani, who herself is something of an earth mother. Tuami has attuned himself to the natural imagery of Oa, and the haft of the knife is parallel to the image of Oa that Liku had carried, the image that Tanakil had built a house for as if it were a doll. Tuami in more than one way has managed to bridge the gap between the animalistic ritual of his own male-oriented religion, symbolized by the knife blade, and the natural symbol of the haft, and it is important to understand the iconography that Golding is using. He has written that the first interpretable sign that earliest sapient man would have left would have been a sign of his belief in God.<sup>15</sup> But what sort of god would emerge from man's mind so early in his existence? Of what type was the earliest religion? According to Golding, that god would have been like Oa, an earth goddess who gave birth to plants and grubs and women, who ultimately brings all life from her belly. Oa has her most overt manifestation in the temple of the ice women, the hollow, melting glaciers that cling against the cliffside. She is also depicted in the Little Oa, which itself is a smooth, round root. That Golding believes that this feminine type of religion was the earliest to be established by human beings is supported by an examination of his essay, "Delphi: The Oracle Revealed," in which he wrote, "Everywhere, you come on the fact that the religion of primitive Greece was a woman's



religion, worship of the Great Mother, the Earth Mother." He adds, "Small clay statuettes of the Earth Mother found in this part of the world date as far back as 10,000 years before Apollo was even heard of."<sup>16</sup> This feminine religion was indeed a healthsome one: if we can take the worship of Oa as any example we can see that, as Golding conceives of it, the female-oriented religion primarily entailed giving innocent thanks for the bountiful provision of the Earth Mother. There was no praying for a good hunt or a good war, no rituals or bloodshed such as those initiated by cruder types of selfish, male-oriented religion. But gradually, as guilt replaced innocence as the predominant concern of man, as bloodshed of animals and man weighed more and more heavily on the conscience of the primitives, man came to use prayer for other things. Prayers of thanksgiving became distorted into prayers for forgiveness of sins and ritual sacrifices were made to appease the new gods. The gods themselves took on violent forms, such as animals and birds of prey, and lightning bolts. And since men were the hunters and warriors, the shedders of blood, they rather than women came to dominate religious activities. Golding wrote of this male-oriented religion that it is linked commonly with human sacrifice, savagery and cannibalism.<sup>17</sup>

The balance between innocent, female-oriented religion and guilt-ridden, male-oriented religion is used symbolically by Golding as the borderline between archetypal innocence and guilt. This is seen most clearly in both *The Inheritors* and "Clonk Clonk," in which both feminine and masculine theologies are overtly presented in opposition



to each other. Opposed to the calm, innocent Neanderthal belief in Oa is the guilt-ridden theology of the inheritors — a theology involving ritual killing and actual shedding of human blood in the form of Pine Tree's finger. The women are the high priests and arbiters of the Neanderthal religion, whereas Marlan is the high priest of the corrupt masculine worship of the new people. Similarly in "Clonk Clonk" the theology is in transition: the women worship the Sky Woman, the moon, whereas the men worship the volcano. The women's religion is a natural one, whereas the belief of the Leopard Men stems from the shedding of blood for the sake of killing. The numerous leopard skulls stand in mute testimony to the ritual sacrifices and bloodshed that takes place at the hands of the men in their secret cult. Suffice to say that Golding favours the "natural" religion over the complex, invented ones, for their very "naturalness" is a haven for innocence and truth and beauty, for an intuitive reliance on the sacred relationships that exist in the universe.

### III

*The Inheritors*, then, describes a clash of two opposed world-views: that of the innocent Neanderthals and that of the guilt-ridden Cro-Magnons. But in order to understand the devastating effects of the clash, we are first made to comprehend and sympathize with the world-view that is to be demolished. The conflict parallels that of Jack and Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*. Unlike the Cro-Magnons, the Neanderthals do not hunt, but do fend off hyaenas. The hyaenas are not afraid of the Neanderthals





as they would be of true men. In "Clonk Clonk," Chimp has no need to fear the hyaenas because "he brought with him the menace of a whole line of light brown creatures that struck from afar; and to those with little thought or no thought at all, his mere appearance was enough" (SG 89). But the hyaenas in *The Inheritors* show no such fear of the Neanderthals — chiefly because the primitive men cannot effectively "strike from afar" with their unshaped rocks and branches (IN 53-54).

When Fa and Lok find a dead deer that has been killed by a sabre-toothed tiger, we learn for the first time that the Neanderthals are capable of making moral decisions. Fa says, "A cat has sucked all her blood. There is no blame" (IN 53). Hastily they chop up the dead deer, struggling against time and growling predators. Lok makes the straightforward moral observation, "'This is bad. This is very bad.'" The narrator does not use such simple language: "The air between the rocks was forbidding with violence and sweat, with the rich smell of meat and wickedness" (IN 54). Darkness envelopes the scene, the palpable darkness of evil that is as much a projection of the perceiver as physical nuance of light. But after the tenderest portions of the doe are gathered, Lok reiterates that "there is no blame" and attempts to rationalize away "the mixture of darkness and joy in his head." He explains "to the darkness" that his people are hungry, and then brilliantly adds the final justification: "The meat is for Mal who is sick" (IN 50).



Several implications can be drawn from this sequence of events. One of the most obvious characteristics of the Neanderthals is that they have a very acute mutual conscience. Again, they experience the darkness of chaos, associated with the world of spirit and interpreted as "evil." Their sense of "bad" is not so much an acquired knowledge as an intuited sense. The Neanderthals are not ignorant of sin but shy away from it. They are not interested in exploring it or experimenting with it or obtaining pleasure from it; rather they avoid it altogether. Their innocence stems not from their unawareness of sin, but from their collective unwillingness to meddle with it, and from their inability to fantasize about it: when a potentially evil object is physically removed from them they immediately put it out of their minds. Thus their innocence is linked to the fact that they have different kinds of intelligence and imagination and memory from *Homo sapiens* — violence and even thoughts of violence hardly ever obtruding in their minds. Yet in spite of their innocence, within the context of their world-view they still exhibit three different grades of thought similar to those exhibited by ordinary men.

It must be emphasized that the allegory of *The Inheritors* is not as straightforward as a quick reading of the novel might suggest. Golding's characterization of both the Neanderthals and the *Homo sapiens* is much too subtle for any categorical judgement in terms of white versus black or innocence versus guilt. The



Neanderthals are not entirely innocent and the New People are not entirely guilty: Golding juggles situation and effect so that we are left knowing that if we as *Homo sapiens* were to be confronted in the Twentieth Century with creatures like Lok or Fa, we would respond in essentially the same way as our early ancestors did. If a modern hunter strolling in the Rockies were suddenly to be confronted with a Sasquatch, the chances are that the man would shoot first and ask questions later, no matter how much Sasquatch experts insisted on the innocence of the legendary giants.

Howard Babb has pointed out many contrasts between the two groups, but they are also parallel to each other in many ways. The Neanderthal tribe consists of eight people: Mal, the old woman, Ha, Nil, Lok, Fa, Liku and the new one. The invading tribe is not much larger. Nine new people are named: Marlan, Tuami, "Tuft", "Chestnut Head", Vakiti ("Pine Tree"), Bata ("Bush"), Vivani, Twal, and Tanakil. Thus the two groups are fairly evenly matched numerically. Yet while the new people have only one casualty, whose body follows those of the adult Neanderthals downstream, the Neanderthals have only one survivor — the new one who goes upstream with the New People. The New People who survive fit reasonably comfortably into a single dugout canoe.

If we stay with the Neanderthals through most of the novel, by the end we are forced to reexamine our stance and sympathies. At first, we cannot understand why the newcomers are so hostile. The Neanderthals seem peace-loving, and we are able to enter totally the



mind of Lok and see his prophetic dreams (*IN* 93). The beautiful simplicity of Neanderthal worship and ritual further endears them to us, and we come to regard the members of our own species as the evil ones. In a sense, *The Inheritors* is a sophisticated animal story like *Black Beauty* in which the reader identifies with the trials and tribulations of the horse and hates its succession of masters even though they are human beings.

The crux of the transposition in the last chapter lies in the fact that we are removed from the Neanderthal point of view and for the first time see the new people from the point of view of members of the same species. The inhabitants of the boat, the inheritors of the earth whom we have come so violently to hate, we suddenly recognize to be our own ancestors — human beings who love and hate, laugh and cry, create and demolish. In the boat, we suddenly feel very much at home, and in retrospect our sojourn with the Neanderthals seems very much a nightmare. We sympathize especially with Tuami, the frustrated artist, who attempts to capture on the ivory haft of his knife the essence of the conflict he has just survived. And for all its irrationality, their fear of the devils seems suddenly justified. Having taken us on an excursion into his own opinions of what man is really like, Golding has plomped us back down in our armchairs, and has handed us back our initial opinions to do with as we will.

And with retrospect, having now identified with the





*Homo sapiens*, it occurs to us that the Neanderthals must have presented a horrifying appearance to the newcomers. A new person first becomes aware of the existence of the Neanderthals in Chapter Three: he responds by killing Ha. But according to Nil's description of what happened, the new person, from our newly obtained fallible human point of view, was justified in reacting as he did. Ha, says Nil, was "running after something" (IN 66). We know that Ha was merely trying to communicate in a friendly way. But the new person had no way of knowing that this strange creature was not pursuing him with some malicious motive, and being human thinks the worst. This, surely, is Golding's point: the attributes given the Neanderthals by the New People are merely extensions of their own guilty nature. Later, we are given a description from a new person of what Ha must have looked like when a guard mimes the actions of the running Fa: "He created a running, crouching thing, his arms flapped like the wings of a bird." Lok is described from an omniscient point of view breaking "into a queer, loping run that made the head bob up and down and the forearms alternate like the legs of a horse" (IN 217). Ludicrous as this may seem to us, it was understandably frightening to the new man who saw Ha running after him in the same way. Similarly, the physical features of the Neanderthals are seen through the eyes of the new people in the form of Tuami's drawing in the clearing, which in turn is viewed through the eyes of Lok: "This figure was red, with enormous



spreading arms and legs and the face glared up at him for the eyes were white pebbles. The hair stood out round the head as though the figure were in the act of some frantic cruelty" (*IN* 199). We know that Tuami is a fairly accurate artist, for the Neanderthals are convinced at first that his drawing of a stag is the real thing (*IN* 146). Tuami had seen the Neanderthals close up when he led the raid on the overhang. His second drawing is less accurate because of his haste, but Lok recognizes the figure as "some kind of man."

Its arms and legs were contracted as though it were leaping forward and it was red as the water had been. There was hair standing out on all sides of the head as the hair of the old man had stood out when he was enraged or frightened. The face was a daub of clay but the pebbles were there, staring blindly (*IN* 215).

Lok himself had seen that Fa resembled "a red squirrel," and Tuami's portrait is further verified by Golding's sudden switch to an omniscient perspective in which Lok is described as a "red creature" with a "chinless mouth":

It was a strange creature, smallish, and bowed. The legs and thighs were bent and there was a whole thatch of curls on the outside of the legs and the arms. The back was high, and covered over the shoulders with curly hair. Its feet and hands were broad, and flat, the great toe projecting inwards to grip. The square hands swung down to the knees. The head was set slightly forward on the strong neck that seemed to lead straight on to the row of curls under the lip. The mouth was wide and soft and above the curls of the upper lip the great nostrils were flared like wings. There was no bridge to the nose and the moon-



shadow of the jutting brow lay just above the tip. The shadows lay most darkly in the caverns above its cheeks and the eyes were invisible in them (IN 219).

No wonder that at the first encounter with the Neanderthals the new people responded with violence, especially when the strange animal appeared to be attacking! Even in modern terms, Ha's death would be described as "self-defense." Judging from Lok's reconstruction of the event, the new man, pursued up the trail, hid behind a rock and, catching Ha off guard, pushed him over the cliffside. Physical contact with the hideous, hairy animal, so human-like and yet so obviously non-human, must have added to the idea that the Neanderthals were devils.

If Ha's murder is justified in terms of self defense, the murder of Nil and the old woman at first appears to be purely callous savagery on the part of the new people. But again we must view the circumstances of the attack from the new objective viewpoint that Golding has provided at the very end of the book. After killing Ha, a fearful enough experience in itself, the new person continued to the overhang and spied on the Neanderthals. In Lok's terms, the man "stalked the people" (IN 97). The sight of the Neanderthals squatting around the fire eating their supper — a deer's guts — must have been terrifying to the new man, especially since the fire is reflected in the old woman's eyes (IN 78). His report no doubt would be justifiably vivid. And it would be confirmed in





the minds of the new people by the subsequent terrifying behavior of the Neanderthals. Both Fa and Nil run to the river and howl into the night "high and long" (*IN 69*). Later, Lok calls out across the river in his strange language and voice. When he gets a response from the new people, "He ran round the clearing, aimlessly, crying out at the top of his voice" like a demented demon (*IN 76*).

Now that more than one new person has seen and heard the fearsome antics of the "devils", a permanent spy is assigned to keep track of the Neanderthals and to observe them (*IN 79*). Lok acts like a parody of King Kong, smashing through the trees and bushes. He quickly climbs to the crown of a beech tree, shakes it and shouts. "He dared a desperate acrobatic in the thin boughs of the beech top, then shouted as loud as he could" (*IN 102*). He keeps shouting and the new people watch as he moves "like a red squirrel from tree to tree" (*IN 103*). No human being, this! Immediately after his exhibition, the new people raid the overhang and kill Nil and the old woman. Upon hearing the screams of the kidnapped Liku, Lok too screams and fights through the briars. In the open of the clearing, "he jumped up and down and shouted." The new people shoot at him, but he continues shouting and gibbering (*IN 106-107*), and runs on all fours more like an animal than a man (*IN 112*).

Nonetheless, in spite of all the rationalization that we



can muster on behalf of our forebears, we must admit that at bottom the new people are frightened for no reason: we know that the Neanderthals are harmless. A very interesting contrast can be drawn between the reaction of the new people to the Neanderthals and the reaction of the Leopard Men to the chimpanzees in "Clonk Clonk". Notice especially similarities of the action of the Boss Chimp to that of Lok:

The Boss Chimp rose, head and shoulders out of the grass. He bared his teeth and snarled. The Leopard Men laughed and jeered and made throwing motions with their spears. The Boss Chimp jumped up and down, snarling and beating the earth with his paws. The youths imitated him, laughing. Only the elders stood still, spears gracefully cradled, lips bent in a tolerant smile. The Boss Chimp stopped jumping up and down. He stood on his hind feet, slowly and clumsily. Slowly and clumsily he laboured away, upright through the long grass (SG 77).

Over time, the Leopard Men have learnt that the chimpanzees are harmless, and they mock the bluster and bravado of the Boss Chimp. Physically speaking, Lok is little more advanced — and certainly no more dangerous — than a chimpanzee. He blusters in the same way and appears just as clumsy. Yet the Neanderthals are slightly too human for the liking of the new people: it is their similarity to human beings, including their use of fire, that is so frightening to the new people, and which causes them to project their own deficiencies onto the innocents.

*The Inheritors* is the most difficult of Golding's books to read and comprehend. Few readers have the patience to work out sys-



tematically in their minds the interlacing details of plot and action that are presented almost surrealistically through the alien type of mind that Golding has created for the Neanderthals. Its style anticipates that of *The Spire*, which, however, is not as chronologically compact, and which focuses more clearly on one central protagonist. The science fiction mode in which it is presented is not unlike that of other novels in this period of Golding's career, such as "Envoy Extraordinary" and *Pincher Martin*.



## CHAPTER FOUR: PINCHER MARTIN

### I

The parallels between *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* are numerous and obvious. Both are fables of the Fall. Both present situations in which world views clash, resulting in death to those innocent people who cannot by their nature conform to the will of the "herd." Both are presented in a quasi-science fiction mode that is set in a world remote from the present in space and time: *Lord of the Flies* is set in the future on an unspecified coral island, and *The Inheritors* in prehistoric Southern Europe, the conjectural home of Neanderthal man at the time of his clash with the Cro-Magnons.

In 1956, Golding published two more works that changed slightly the direction of his writing from the hitherto serious, didactic fable of his first two works to a lighter, more humorous, almost flippant fictional mode which still, however, retained many of the central characteristics of his earlier style. "Envoy Extraordinary," first published "under the guise of science fiction,"<sup>1</sup> is set in a microcosm not unlike that of *Lord of the Flies*. *Pincher Martin* is also set on an island, this time an imaginary one; it is less obviously science fiction in that it is concerned more with metaphysical issues of guilt and innocence in a situation quite imaginable in the twentieth century: whereas the other novels look ahead or back in time, *Pincher Martin* is concerned with the recognizable present.





Richard Tyre wrote in the introduction to *Sometime, Never*, in which "Envoy Extraordinary" first appeared, that Golding asks in the novelette "What would you do, knowing all the good and all the bad that man's inventive curiosity has brought forth, if you were in the Garden of Eden again?" The question is, of course, familiar from *Lord of the Flies*. The technique of presenting a fictitious world from the past is familiar to us from *The Inheritors*. In "Envoy Extraordinary," Golding presents us with a humorous situation comedy in which caricatures of the character types that he has already identified in earlier novels interact in predictable ways. As Elizabeth Stevens remarked, "All Golding's themes are here: a linking of evil with knowledge; a futile search for perfection and man's freedom that is foiled by man himself; a belief that the battle between weak and strong is perpetual."<sup>2</sup>

The action of "Envoy Extraordinary" takes place at Caesar's summer villa on the island of Capri in the third century A. D. The peace of the island is disrupted by the intrusion of Phanocles, a Greek inventor from Alexandria, who aspires to be a technocrat of the most insidious type; and Posthumus, Caesar's suspicious, legitimate heir. Both the inventor and the soldier are capable of widespread destruction, but Caesar comes to recognize that Phanocles' inventions — a steamship, an explosive missile, and a printing machine — will in the long run be much more harmful to the world than a mere army. His decision to send the scientist to China saves the western world fifteen centuries of grief.



Golding attempted in "Envoy Extraordinary" to do approximately the same thing as he later accomplished in "The Scorpion God." Suppose that history could be telescoped so that the Dark Ages and the Renaissance were by-passed. What would have happened if a black genius were to emerge with the steam engine in the third century? What would have happened, in other words, if the Greek mathematicians and scientists had been allowed to continue their experiments after the Roman conquest? The first steam engine was in fact invented in the second century B. C., and met the same fate as Phanocles' machine. A record of this machine was kept at Alexandria.<sup>3</sup> What would have happened had some genius come across these early experiments and developed them into weapons of war? In the course of "Envoy Extraordinary," we see precisely what would have happened on a small scale — we see, in short, precisely what *has* happened in our century when technocrats have been allowed a free hand.

Again, the novel can be clearly understood in terms of the conflict among the three grades of thought that are discernible as operating in the work. Grade-three thought is demonstrated both by Mamillius and Posthumus, both of whom are portrayed as impetuous and hypocritical. Mamillius, contemptuous of people who "cadge favours," is secretly ambitious to "inherit the purple fringe" on the Emperor's toga. Ostensibly a poet, he plagiarizes almost everything he writes (SG 154). He has a "genuine distaste of humanity" (SG 137), and Caesar admits that he will make a terrible emperor. His lack of perceptiveness leads directly to his loss of Euphrosyne, and emphasizes



his impetuous nature. As Caesar remarks, "Only a young fool like Mamillius could mistake her pathological shyness for a becoming modesty."

No less impetuous is Posthumus, who in his first appearance rams Phanocles' steamship before he knows what it is, and is all set for battle in spite of the fact that Caesar has no troops (SG 152). The information on which he acts is scanty and inaccurate. When Phanocles explains the mechanism of his inventions, Posthumus threatens to execute the inventor (SG 156). Posthumus' soldiers and slaves prove to be as irrational as their leader and attempt to destroy the *Amphitrite* by setting fire to it. The fire heats up the boilers and the ship speeds up, setting fire in turn to Posthumus' fleet.

The basic irrationality of grade-three thinkers such as Mamillius, Posthumus and the soldiers and slaves is quite beyond the comprehension of Phanocles, a grade-two thinker and technocrat whose idea of progress is the efficient destruction of human beings. Like Piggy, whom Golding has described as a potential technocrat, Phanocles is short-sighted in more ways than one (SG 125). He is totally selfish, and more concerned with the relationship of things than people.<sup>4</sup> In his opinion, the tenth wonder of the world is not his sister, as Caesar suggests, but his ship. The universe, Phanocles tries to explain, is a machine controlled by laws that he has come to learn. It is devoid of poetry, magic and religion, for there is no such thing as magic, no "unpredictable force of poetry outside your rolls of paper." There are only mathematical relationships in





the universe — some of which Phanocles has managed to work out and put into practice in his inventions.

Caesar, with remarkable perceptiveness, addresses Phanocles and apostrophizes rationalistic scientists everywhere in his explanation of the limitations of grade-two thought:

"I said you are hubristic: you are also selfish. You are alone in your universe with natural law and people are an interruption, an intrusion. . . . Your single-minded and devoted selfishness, your royal preoccupation with the only thing that can interest you, could go near to wiping life off the earth as I wipe the bloom from this grape" (SG 173).

He adds,

"You work among perfect elements and therefore politically you are an idealist. There will always be slaves though the name may change. What is slavery but the domination of the weak by the strong? How can you make them equal? Or are you fool enough to think that men are born equal? " (SG 176).

Clearly Golding is speaking through Caesar in this last, didactic chapter, which returns to one of Golding's primary themes: the weaknesses of the kind of rationalism so prevalent in this century, including the faith that man will know how to use his improved technology rationally — the faith that man is socially perfectible. Phanocles is skeptical of religion, myth, poetry, morality and aesthetics; with his mechanical inventions he would subject man to a rule by machines, and failing that would destroy the world.

Caesar is one of the most appealing characters ever created by Golding, a man of consummate wisdom who recognizes the value of both reason and the human spirit — a grade-one thinker



complete with intuitive insight, compassion, wit and common sense. "Understanding is my business," he tells Mamillius. He has an "air of clean distinction" and is "perfected by art, from the gleaming scalp under the scanty white hair to the tips of the tended toes" (SG 118). The order of his mind is as meticulous as that of his body. He is an optimist who believes that life is "vast and wonderful" and he accepts humanity at face value — as essentially, beautifully irrational. He alone in the novelette manages to combine the practical with the aesthetic, to blend reason with the mathematically incalculable shock of the world of spirit.

## II

"Envoy Extraordinary" provides an interesting transition between *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*. But whereas in the novelette Golding was concerned with the interaction of character types (so much so that it proved to be quite adaptable to the stage as *The Brass Butterfly* (1958)), in *Pincher Martin* Golding was more concerned with focusing on one condemned protagonist and examining his inner fears and anguish. In this novel, as in *Free Fall* and *The Pyramid*, which are also set in the twentieth century, there are obvious autobiographical overtones: Golding, like Christopher Martin, was a naval officer during the Second World War, and was once shipwrecked, stranded for several days at sea. Like Christopher, Golding was an aspiring writer and actor, and both played Danny in *Night Must Fall* in a wartime theatre in London's West End.<sup>5</sup>



*Pincher Martin* has been variously regarded as an account of the legendary kaleidoscope of one's past life flashing before one's eyes *in articulo mortis*,<sup>6</sup> and as an account of a rationalist's purgatory.<sup>7</sup> It can be interpreted convincingly in both ways. In terms of the action of the novel, Pincher falls into the sea and after what seems to him to be an eternity of struggle finds himself marooned on a rock. As he grows weaker and weaker, he has a complex series of vivid hallucinations in which he recalls the events of his past life. His awareness is slowly taken away from him until only a glimmer, the barest flicker, remains. All the way through the novel, from half way through the first chapter to the penultimate chapter, we adopt the point of view of the protagonist.

The characterization of Christopher Hadley Martin is even more starkly dramatic than that of Ralph or Lok. We can readily identify with Chris because he is an adult who has already lost his innocence. Only with hindsight do we come to realize that the protagonist is not in fact surviving on a physical rock — that his body is dead. The details of his initial fall from the bridge of his ship are not given until late in the novel. At the beginning, he is already in the water, struggling for air. Then his drowning body suddenly stops struggling and "there was a kind of truce, observation of the body" (*PM* 8). Once his body stops, his ego takes over. He has his first flashback while still in the water, remembering a toy, the glass figure of a man suspended in liquid in a jar. He becomes identified briefly with the glass figure, but then appears miraculously



to come alive again and he renews his struggle — at least in his imagination. He imagines that he kicks off his heavy seaboots, floats to the surface, inflates his rubber life tube, and cries for help. In the second chapter, his imagination invents a rock island (he knows that Rockall is near the place where his ship was torpedoed), and he dreams that he climbs up on it using limpets, a physical impossibility. The rock is described in terms that Chris knows best, the language of female anatomy (*PM* 28-35). His climbing up into and on top of the rock is an act of rapine that is, as we quickly come to learn, totally "in character" for Pincher.

For Christopher Hadley Martin is the epitome of fallen man. As Golding himself has described him, he is "very much fallen — he's fallen more than most. In fact, I went out of my way to damn Pincher as much as I could by making him the most unpleasant, the nastiest type I could think of."<sup>8</sup> He cuckolds Alfred and Peter and tries to rape Mary. He attempts to murder both Peter and Nat. He is described by Pete and George as a great big maggot who tries to gorge on all the other maggots in the world. He is the incarnation of the seven deadly sins.<sup>9</sup> Christopher tells himself,

Think about women then or eating. Think about eating women, eating men, crunching up Alfred, that other girl, that boy, that crude and unsatisfactory experiment, lie restful as a log and consider the gnawed tunnel of life right up to this uneasy intermission (*PM* 88).

Yet although Pincher is portrayed by Golding as ugly and evil, we still feel some sort of empathy for him. For however evil he might







appear to be, he is still a human being, and a suffering one at that.

Golding's Pincher is attractive because he represents the possibility of rebellion against the strictures of Destiny. We sympathize with the rebel spirit of Pincher which will not die, which so obstinately refuses to be absorbed into nothingness. We admire a Pincher who can rage at the gods like a true Titan, "I am Atlas. I am Prometheus. . . . Ajax! Prometheus!" (*PM* 164, 192). We admire the eloquence of his revolt, empty though it may be, when, confronted with the god that he has made in his own image he echoes the mad Lear:

Rage, roar, spout!  
Let us have wind, rain, hail, gouts of blood  
Storms and tornadoes . . . hurricanes and typhoons  
(*PM* 197).

On trial before the god-judge of his own creation, Pincher lamely pleads insanity as an excuse for the many inconsistencies that spring out of his experience on the rock — such as soluble guano, a live red lobster, the limpets that act like suction cups, and the many hints that he is dead (*PM* 173, 194). But as his image predicts, "Even that crevice will crumble" (*PM* 195). The god, invented by that essential and central part of Christopher's ego which is aware of the reality of his situation, tells Pincher that he has already created his heaven, the heaven of negation represented by the black lightning. All his life, Pincher has been greedily devouring other people and things. On the rock, he himself comes to be devoured by Death, to the extent that all things that he has eaten are taken away from him. At the end, even the claws, representing his greed, are demolished, worn away



by the black lightning "in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy" (*PM* 201).<sup>10</sup>

By the time of his second death, we have come at once to detest and to empathize with Pincher. We have seen that he is human, that he has the capacity not only to sin but to suffer and to fear. He was once a child like each one of us, and like most of us had bad dreams and was afraid of the dark. We feel compassion for him — the very feeling that his God feels for him and which he shrinks from — because he has dared to defy the destiny that ultimately has to come to all men. His act of defiance against Death is absurd, but nonetheless heroic. He is more than just a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the ocean floor. He is not in retreat, but rather has lived to the hilt. All alone on his rock, he fights a battle with Death, a battle that is greater than mankind.

We can view Pincher, then, in two ways: as hero and as villain. There is no question that, had Golding written a novel about Pincher Martin's life up to the time of his attempted murder of Nat, without mentioning his afterlife, we would have called Pincher a villain. And there is equally little doubt that, had we seen Pincher determined to survive on his rock at all costs without knowing anything of his former life, we would regard him as a hero. The line between his heroism and his villainy can be drawn at his physical death. But nonetheless Pincher is responsible for the villainous things he did in life; his actions and attitudes, his sins and crimes all constitute his essence, his Being. Thus Pincher is the sum of all



his undoubted villainy *and* his heroic determination to survive at all costs. Martin's dilemma is typical of modern man, as Alan W.

Watts explained in his book on Christian myth:

Our culture is utterly hypnotized into the notion that mere continuity, survival, is a good — if not the supreme good. Hence we value practical facts above all other knowledge . . . . To what? Obviously, to keep going on, to keep consuming and accumulating, longer and longer, more and more . . . .

If the only self which I know is a thing dead and done, a *was*, a "has-been", and I am ever reluctant to admit that I am dead, my only recourse is to work and struggle to give this "has-been" a semblance of life — to make it continue, move, get somewhere. But because it is dead, and has all the fixity and permanence of an unchangeable fact, this "I" can only go on being what it was. Like a machine, it can only repeat itself *ad nauseam*, however fast it may be run.

Thus when a dead man talks, he gives us the facts; he tells all and says nothing.<sup>11</sup>

Watts is talking metaphorically here. But his remarks are telling, for Pincher himself declares, "I am what I was," and at the end screams, "Faster! Faster!" as if his world were spinning out of control (*PM* 98). Watts indicates that this type of "immortal, continuing death . . . is perhaps what the myth means by everlasting, eternally recurring damnation." He links the Christian myth to the classical myths of Ixion, Sisyphus and Tantalus, all of whom Martin resembles. And in Watts' sense, Martin "died" a spiritual death long before his physical death.



In *Pincher Martin*, Golding deliberately singled out Christopher to represent a specific type: the atheistic rationalist who is smug in his view of the world, indulging in the licence that grade-two thought can bring. As the author put it,

Christopher Hadley Martin had no belief in anything but the importance of his own life; no love, no God. Because he was created in the image of God he had a freedom of choice which he used to centre the world on himself. He did not believe in purgatory and therefore when he died it was not presented to him in overtly theological terms. The greed for life which had been the mainspring of his nature, <sup>12</sup>forced him to refuse the selfless act of dying.

Although Pincher is primarily a grade-two thinker, he does display some elements of grade-three thought when it proves convenient for him to do so. In fact one of the primary examples of his resorting to grade-three thought comes with his initial determination not to accept the fact of death. His ego is so enormous that it invents (without fully realizing what it is doing) a rock and continues to persist in claims of existence for its body, long after it "knows" subconsciously that its body is dead. This egotism is an insidious form of prejudice which assumes the superiority of the "I":

I won't die.  
I can't die.  
Not me —  
Precious (*PM* 14).

Christopher Martin has been so accustomed to taking the best of everything, has been so accustomed to living high off the hog, so to speak, that he cannot consent to his life being taken away from him





so suddenly. He can't die, and yet he willed Nathaniel Walterson to die. He can't die, and yet he threatened Mary with death when she refused his advances. He can't die, and yet he almost killed Peter in a motorcycle race. Throughout his life, Martin has taken everything and given nothing, and now out of habit he refuses to give up his life.

The reason for Christopher's deep, incessant hatred of Nat is jealousy over the fact that Nat has successfully courted Mary Lovell. "Christ how I hate you," he mutters to himself on the bridge just before he tries to murder Nat. "I could eat you. Because you fathomed her mystery, you have a right to handle her transmuted cheap tweed; because you both have made a place where I can't get; because in your fool innocence — you've got what I had to get or go mad" (PM 100-101). And yet, inconsistently, on his last date with Mary, when she refused to "open her knees" to him, Martin had told her, "I loathe you. I never want to see you or hear of you as long as I live" (PM 152). Pincher's hypocrisy is further demonstrated when he imagines himself calling for help to Nathaniel, whom he had only minutes before tried to murder (PM 15). "'Help, curse you, sod you, bugger you — Help!" he yells (PM 18). A passionate atheist, Martin also calls on God and Christ for help (PM 19, 20).

Martin's habitual hypocrisy is emphasized by his deceit. As Broes noted, "he has played a part in life itself, advancing himself through deception and deceit,"<sup>13</sup> consciously acting much of the time to seek favours or to get himself out of trouble. He bluffs



his way into a commission in the navy, and when he is so absorbed with his hatred for Nat that he forgets to turn the ship, he uses all his acting powers to put across the lie that he saw some wreckage in the water. He pretends to be nice to Nat, but his gestures never convey the truth of his feelings: "the dark centre made itself wave cheerfully to the foreshortened figure" (*PM* 55). Moments later he curses his former friend.

Martin realizes that the hatred that he feels for Nat, and that indirectly is linked to his death, stems not from anything rational but from an obsession for Mary, an obsession that eats at his very soul like acid. In this respect he is like Jack, who is obsessed with the idea of killing a pig, with all the imagery of rapine involved in the ritual of the hunt, or like Jocelin, who is obsessed with building his spire with all the Freudian implications of his frustrated love for Goody Pangall:

Ever since I met her and she interrupted the pattern coming at random, obeying no law of life, facing me with the insoluble, unbearable problem of her existence the acid's been chewing at my guts. I can't even kill her because that would be her final victory over me. Yet as long as she lives the acid will eat. She's there. In the flesh. In the not even lovely flesh. In the cheap mind. Obsession. Not love. Or if love, insanely compounded of this jealousy of her very being (*PM* 103-104).

Mary is to Martin what Sartre would call an "Other." She obsesses him because she refuses to give up her own identity to be absorbed in his. Martin cannot possess her as a "thing," because she has her own free will, and refuses to be reduced to an object. Thus she at



once poses a threat to Martin, and a challenge. It is Mary's gaze — her eyes — that so unnerves Martin (*PM* 152), just as it is the genuineness of expression reflected through the rearrangement of Nat's facial muscles when he smiles "from the projected centre" that causes Martin to love him and hate him at once. "Others" like Mary and Nat and the captain cannot be possessed, cannot be "eaten;" they can only pose a threat for Pincher's self-centred ego.

Martin's obsession for Mary anticipates that of Mountjoy for Beatrice, in which, however, Beatrice is consumed by Sammy because her will is not strong enough to resist his. But the fact that Martin contemplates the murder, first of Mary, which he concludes is impossible because she would haunt him (as indeed Goody haunts Jocelin, and Beatrice haunts Sammy), and then of Nat, puts him more squarely in league with Jack and Roger of *Lord of the Flies*. Michael Gallagher has written of Pincher, "He belongs to the camp of Jack who wanted 'fun' rather than the trouble of keeping the fire going, and he is the most extreme single image of ruthless egotism in Golding."<sup>14</sup> If Jack is a delinquent, Pincher is a criminal. Both completely ignore any moral code and are equally menaces to society. Pincher also resembles Jack in that he, like the Jack who is liberated by war paint, is *all* mask. Pete and George introduce Martin to caricatures of himself in the masks of the seven deadly sins. "'What about Pride, George?'" says Pete. "'He could play that without a mask and just stylized make-up, couldn't he?'" And then: "'Chris-Greed. Greed-Chris. Know each other.'" Pete culminates the analogy with "'Think





you can play Martin, Greed?" (PM 120). Lee Whitehead has commented on this final inversion of names: "It is as if he had waved aside Christopher Hadley Martin to address the center, and this suggests the way in which its acting will lead finally to the stripping away of all masks."<sup>15</sup> Strip off the mask, and nothing is left.

In fact, Pincher in life became so used to acting that eventually he deluded himself, and this led to his downfall. He had assumed that the theatre for which he worked needed him more than anyone else, that he was "essential" and therefore would never be drafted into the war. And he deluded himself that his affair with Helen, the producer's wife, would guarantee stability. But George has chosen his destiny for him:

"No, old man. I'm sorry, but you're not essential."

"But George — we've worked together! You know me — "

"I do, old man. Definitely."

"I should be wasted in the Forces. You've seen my work."

"I have, old man."

"Well then — "

The look up under the eyebrows. The suppressed smile. The smile allowed to spread until the white teeth were reflected in the top of the desk.

"I've been waiting for something like this. That's why I didn't kick you out before. I hope they mar your profile, old man. The good one" (PM 153-154).

The role of George in choosing Martin's destiny for him is parallel to the role of Aunt Alison in *The Spire*. Martin's delusion of self-importance leads to service in the Navy, and indirectly to his death at sea. But in his invention of the rock, Martin goes one step



further along the route of self-deception. His ego invents not only the rock out of "the nag of an aching tooth," but a body with functional organs (*PM* 24-28). In this way his ego adopts a system of belief which posits his continuing physical existence. But the invented premise itself stems from a prejudice that he is so "precious" that he cannot die. It is at this point that Martin is no longer capable of villainy (he is, after all, alone on his "rock" and therefore cannot be a social menace) and becomes a parody of a grade-two thinker: he attempts to apply principles of logic to the illusory sense data that he *believes* he experiences, but which are based solely on invented *memories* of the physical world. Martin's creation of a convincing world for himself requires skills identical to those of the novelist creating a convincing novel, and we recall that on "civvy street" Martin, like Golding, was an aspiring writer as well as actor (*PM* 94, 104). The process of imaginative invention of a fictitious world is the same process for both author and character, a fact that again anticipates *Free Fall* and, in terms of the broader creative process, *The Spire*.

### III

Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor have drawn an interesting parallel between the earlier passages of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pincher Martin* in which Crusoe and Martin are washed ashore by the water. They draw some conclusions about the two different types of "realism" that the authors use:



Where Defoe's passage is dominated by the personal pronoun, in Golding it is not the beholder but what is beheld that takes all our attention. He works to make us experience as directly as possible what is being described. . . . The two kinds of "realism" these passages aim at is an inseparable part of the imaginative vision, and hence the structures of the novels from which they come.

They add, regarding Golding's novel:

It will seem at first that the awareness is mainly, even obsessively, physical; an experience through the senses of a man's subjection to his environment. But in fact where the "realism" is taking us is inside his head. We might not be able to predict the full outcome, but it will eventually reveal a fearful imaginative logic. The rock, whose "realism" is itself so considerable an achievement, will disappear; the inside of the head will remain the only "reality" that exists.

Realism in *Pincher Martin*, then, turns out to be increasingly ironic.<sup>16</sup>

Two distinct styles of narrative writing can be isolated in the novel — the style of Martin's imagined "present" when he is coping with the forces that work upon his ego, and the style of the flashbacks and final scene. The first of these two styles is characterized by simple sentence structure, with frequent use of copula verbs and the passive voice. The struggle between Christopher and the hostile elements is emphasized by the sentence structure, in which Christopher, or *things* associated with or belonging to him, constitute the subject of the sentence, and the elements against which he is struggling constitute the objects. Always the sentence structure remains relatively simple, and often many sentences in a row are of the same length, so that the style becomes monotonous — a tedium, however, that mirrors itself in Pincher's own fatigue.



A sampling of pages will suffice to show the technique. On page 26, in the paragraph beginning with the sentence, "He began to experiment," eight of the twelve sentences begin with "he" or "his" — a marked contrast to the "I" of Defoe. Similarly, on page 36, "He put his feet down," "He held his breath," "He lost his hold," "He fell on all fours," "He staggered round," "He got his knife free," "He ducked down," "He found rock," "He found holds," — and so on. The use of copula verbs is exemplified at the beginning of Chapter Four:

The man was inside two crevices. There was first the rock . . . . The rock was negative. . . . The shudders were beaten . . . . There was dull fire . . . . There was a little fire . . . . But the man was intelligent . . . . He himself was at the far end . . . . There was a mass of him . . . . Beyond the mass was the round, bone globe (PM 48).

By contrast, the style of the flashbacks is more emotionally charged, characterized by complex sentence structure with active verbs and lively dialogue, counter-pointed with simple, short sentences, often only one word in length:

The herd of merchantmen chugged on at six knots with the destroyers like outriders scouring the way before them, sweeping the sea clear with their invisible brooms, changing course altogether, all on one string (PM 52).

Here, in the flashbacks, we see a style familiar from *Lord of the Flies*:

Nathaniel was still engaged with his aeons, feet held by friction on the corticene, bony rump on the rail just aft of the thrower. His hands were up to his face, his improbable length swaying with the scend of the swells.

"Silly ass."

"He'll do that once too often, sir" (PM 53).





This passage is rich in alliteration and paints a verbal picture of Nathaniel that verges on caricature. The power of Golding's prose in the flashbacks is further exemplified in the internal monologue: "There were ten thousand ways of killing a man. You could poison him and watch the smile turn into a rictus. You could hold his throat until it was like a hard bar" (*PM* 154). We are reminded here of the internal monologues of Ralph, Lok and Tuami. Usually, description in the flashbacks is minimal, in the form of dialogue springing directly from Pincher's experiences on the rock. Yet when Golding does allow himself to describe, as in the scene in which Christopher tries to rape Mary, the effect is startling:

Then the summer lightning over a white face  
with two staring eyes only a few inches away, eyes  
of the artificial woman, confounded in her pretenses  
and evasion, forced now to admit her own crude,  
human body — eyes staring now in deep and implacable  
hate (*PM* 152).

Mary's eyes are to haunt Christopher again and again, and here they are given definition for the reader as well.

The flashbacks are couched in emotion if only because they are pictures of Martin as he was in life: hypocritical, devious, spiteful, a man controlled by passionate hatred, envy, greed, jealousy, malice, whose own vision of himself, seen in retrospect and appropriately edited, is of a jaundiced, ugly eater of other people. All of this emotion is conveyed in the flashbacks. But the rational, logical reconstruction of his life in his mind is methodical, low key, down-to-earth. For on the rock, Christopher Martin is concerned



not with emotional responses to personal slights, but with "things," with physical objects that are an indication to him of the continuing existence of the external world. In fact his physical world becomes too real, "too hard," and his "rock" is soon recognized for what it is — the memory of a rotting tooth the surface of which is harder than stone. In inventing his pseudo-physical world, Martin is very careful to be as precise and as logical as possible, as "real" in his reconstruction of the physical world as his memory and sense of credibility will allow him to be. Obviously the truth of logical arguments depends upon the accuracy of the premises, and Martin makes a series of deductions very carefully — from false premises. In this respect, *Pincher Martin* appears to be a parody of Sartre's rewriting of Descartes. Descartes had postulated, after a mental trip through the void of negation, that the one thing man could not deny and upon which one could base a system of metaphysics is the fact that "I think." Sartre said that Descartes went too far when he concluded from this observation, "therefore I am." According to Sartre, Descartes' conclusion jumps from the "for-itself" (consciousness) to the "in-itself" (things) across a gap of nothingness. For one can deduce nothing about one's physical existence from the fact that one is conscious. Hence Sartre bases his philosophy not on the proposition "*Cogito ergo sum*," but rather on the observation "*Cogito*."<sup>17</sup> What happens if there is no physical body, or if the in-itself of one's existence is dead? We cannot know for sure what happens after death. Supposing the "for-itself" continues to exist? Then the imaginative



powers of the for-itself would have to *invent* a world, just as it does in a vivid dream — indeed, just as the novelist does in the novel. And this, in essence, is exactly what Christopher Martin does. Once he assumes the accuracy of the illusory sense impressions that his imagination supplies, he creates a "future" fitted to his own nature. Only by excluding the illogical and the unrealistic can Pincher retain the delusion, and "live the lie" which is the thread of his life.

At first he is not careful. After his physical death, "the pictures were so confused that there was as much danger that they would destroy his personality as that the spark would go out" (*PM* 30). In spite of the apparent activity of his brain, "the eyes stared and did not blink" (*PM* 32), a reminder of his true physical state. But slowly, his confused thoughts sort themselves out and he concentrates on the primary pictures of "a woman's body, white and detailed" and an "aching tooth," symbols of his lust and greed (*PM* 24, 25). Besides being a tooth, the rock is also a vagina, "the dark lavatorial cleft, with its dripping weed, with its sessile, mindless life of shell and jelly" (*PM* 32-33). The side of the rock "widened above the narrowest part of the cleft into a funnel" (*PM* 35). Pincher returns to the womb, to the condition of gestation. He enters the cleft, struggles up the funnel and lies upon it, assuming the position of a foetus. But still he realizes deep down that "his body was in some other place that had nothing to do with the landscape" (*PM* 40), that "the rock was negative," and that what





remains of him lives solely inside his "dark skull" (PM 42-45). His ego is torn between recognizing his true state of death and struggling on in his delusion:

The chill and the exhaustion spoke to him clearly. Give up, they said, lie still. Give up the thought of return, the thought of living. Break up, leave go. Those white bodies are without attraction or excitement, the faces, the words, happened to another man in another place. An hour on this rock is a lifetime. What have you to lose? There is nothing here but torture. Give up. Leave go (PM 45).

We are reminded here of the Lord of the Flies' injunction to Simon. Christopher dismisses this warning, however, and like Piggy thinks of the practical: "'Shelter. Must have shelter. Die if I don't'" (PM 44, 45). He finds another hole into which he crawls backwards like a lobster, intent on playing out his game. Safely quartered, he searches for water, finds some, wastes it and curses himself: "'Use your loaf, man. Use your loaf'" (PM 59). "Intelligence" and "education," he tells himself, are the keys to survival on the rock. His concern for rescue also echoes Piggy (PM 60). Finally, he searches for food (PM 62). The priorities are identical to those of Piggy:

"The end to be desired is rescue. For that, the bare minimum necessary is survival. I must keep this body going. I must give it drink and food and shelter" (PM 81).

He resorts to tricks and games to keep his grip on reality. As with Piggy, "speech was proof of identity," and naming things becomes an important occupation: he names the physical features of his rock after familiar, real places to add to the illusion of reality (PM 82, 84).



He tries in vain to remember the real name of Rockall, but it escapes him. His whole activity is that of a rationalist who must live in an ordered world over which he has control:

"I am busy surviving. I am netting down this rock with names and taming it. Some people would be incapable of understanding the importance of that. What is given a name is given a seal, a chain. If this rock tries to adapt me to its ways I will refuse and adapt it to mine. I will impose my routine on it, my geography. I will tie it down with names" (*PM* 86-87).

He needs to categorize and impose his will on the microcosmic rock as modern scientists — indeed as men through time — have imposed their will on the geography and morphology of the world.

Before long, Pincher lies like "a stone man, open-mouthed and gazing into the sky." He cannot sleep for "sleep was a consenting to die, to go into complete unconsciousness, the personality defeated, acknowledging too frankly what is implicit in mortality." In sleep, "the carefully hoarded and enjoyed personality, our only treasure and at the same time our only defense must die into the ultimate truth of things, the black lightning that splits and destroys all, the positive, unquestionable nothingness" (*PM* 90, 91). This "black lightning" is an oblique reference to Nat's envisioned "back door" to heaven. Martin had told Nathaniel that he was "not really interested in heaven," but rather, "'I'm going to have a damned long life and get what I'm after.'" When Nat asked the nature of his goal in life, Martin had replied, simply, "'Various things'" (*PM* 71).



Since in life Martin denied heaven and God and spiritual values, he could make a philosophy of life for himself which allowed him to get whatever he wanted. The deduction Martin had obviously made is similar to that made by Sammy Mountjoy in *Free Fall*:

There is no spirit, no absolute. Therefore right and wrong are a parliamentary decision like no betting slips or drinks after half past ten. But why should Samuel Mountjoy, sitting by his well, go by the majority decision? Why should not Sammy's good be what Sammy decides? . . . There are no morals that can be deduced from natural science, there are only immorals (*FF* 171).

Martin's world, like Mountjoy's, is "an amoral, a savage place in which man was trapped without hope, to enjoy what he could while it was going." Morality negated, men can treat their fellows as pawns in the game of life. Martin, like Mountjoy, had used people to his own advantage, had stepped over their broken bodies, using them to ascend the ladder towards his ultimate end of "things." Yet even as his gluttonous, lecherous life is reviewed before him he remains indifferent. He persists in holding "the thread of my life" in accordance with the unwritten codes of the rationalist: "I have a right to live if I can!" and "'My choice was my own'" (*PM* 196-97).

Pincher's purgatory is not the orthodox Christian one, but the non-Christian, "ordinary" universe and the inevitability of cyclical patterns of life and death within that universe. As Golding has remarked, Pincher Martin "spent a whole of his life acquiring things that really belonged to other people, and bit by bit they were taken away from him in purgatory, till he ended as what he was."<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere he elaborated:



To achieve salvation, individuality — the persona, must be destroyed. But suppose the man is nothing but greed? His original spirit, God-given, the *Scintillans Dei*, is hopelessly obscured by his thirst for separate individual life? What can he do at death but refuse to be destroyed? Inhabit a world he invents from half-remembered scraps of physical life, a rock which is nothing but the memory of an aching tooth-ache? To a man desperately greedy for life, tooth-ache is preferable to extinction, and that is the terrible secret of purgatory, it is all the world that the God-resisting soul cannot give up.<sup>19</sup>

The *Scintillans Dei* that Golding refers to here is the "darker dark, self-evident and indestructible" that Martin's "centre" discovers upon self-examination, and shrinks away from (PM 45).<sup>20</sup> Golding explained to Jack Biles:

You think about yourself, and no matter how many layers you strip off, there is always something thinking about yourself. The thing which is thinking, which is examining, cannot examine itself, you see, because it is the thing which is examining. . . . There is deep inside any man just this one point of awareness which cannot examine itself, because it is working when it tries to examine (TC 74).<sup>21</sup>

Earlier, in a private letter to John Peter, he wrote of the imagery of darkness and the cellar that pervades almost all of his later novels:

The cellar in Pincher Martin represents more than childhood terrors; a whole philosophy in fact — suggesting that God is the thing we turn away from into life, and therefore we hate and fear him and make a darkness there. . . . Pincher is running away all the time, always was running, from the moment he had a persona and could say "I."<sup>22</sup>

Again we can put this squarely in the context of Christian myth. Alan Watts wrote of the rebelling angels led by "Beelzebub, the





Lord of the Flies":

Yet because God was infinite . . . the devils found no escape from his light. Turning from it they found it facing them. Above and below, and around on every side, they rushed towards darkness and found — always — the inescapable Light, the hated Love which began to burn them like a raging fire, so that the only escape lay inwards, to the solitary, isolated sanctuary of their own wills. Therefore this place of isolation and solitary confinement, where the light of God torments and gives no gladness, became the place of Satan's dominion, the Kingdom of Hell.<sup>23</sup>

This passage gives insight into Martin's hatred for both Nat and Mary, who always had treated him kindly, with love; and it also explains the action of the black lightning as "compassionate" and yet an object of hatred to Martin because he has rejected it, or "turned away" from it. Again, to quote Golding, "Just to be Pincher is purgatory; to be Pincher for eternity is hell."<sup>24</sup>

To understand the "darkness" that Martin experiences and fears, we must backtrack a little and examine the space left between the logical steps, that Martin refers to as "the gap of not-being" and which he seeks to rationalize away. For Martin, the "gap of not-being" is the glimpsing of the stasis of death, but it is also the glimpsing of the true Self, the anguish that lies at the heart of Being. Unlike Heidigger, who had placed Being at the centre of Self, Sartre viewed the Self as vacant, a gap of nothingness "like a hole of being at the heart of Being." William Barrett explained,

For Sartre . . . the nothingness of the Self is the basis for the will to action: the bubble is empty and will collapse, and so what is left us but the



energy and passion to spin that bubble out?  
 Man's existence is absurd in the midst of a  
 cosmos that knows him not; the only meaning he  
 can give himself is through the free project that  
 he launches out of his own nothingness.<sup>25</sup>

In a parody of Sartre's existential man, Martin frenziedly plays out roles to keep the inevitable realization of the nothingness of his Self at bay. Sartre wrote in *The Psychology of the Imagination*, "The gliding of the world into the bosom of nothingness and the emergence of human reality in this very nothingness can happen only through the position of *something* which is nothingness in relation to the world and in relation to which the world is nothing. By this we evidently define the structure of the imagination."<sup>26</sup> In *Being and Nothingness*, he remarked, "Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being, like a worm."<sup>27</sup> We recall Pincher's own expression of revilement in the charged pun about his bowels: "Why drag in good and evil when the serpent lies coiled in my own being?" (PM 163).

Martin experiences pangs of fear when he remembers childhood nightmares of ghosts in the cellarage of his ancient house. The flaws of detail and omission in his logic (such as the soluble guano and the red lobster swimming) combine to impress on him the fact that he is no longer physically alive. With this realization comes "a gap of darkness in which there was no one" (PM 167). His confidence in the "realistic" world that he has created is suddenly shattered, and Martin experiences "the darkness of separation. . . deeper than that of sleep. It was deeper than any living darkness because time had stopped or come to an end." Then he says, "'Then



I was dead. That was death. I have been frightened to death. Now the pieces of me have come together and I am just alive." He consciously tries to forget the "Terror" he experienced before the "gap of not-being," and rationalizes away the error in logic by suggesting that he is mad or that "I remembered wrongly" (PM 168-70). Gradually he reasserts a measure of "sanity" by application of logic and psychological dogma:

"The whole problem of insanity is so complex that a satisfactory definition, a norm, has never been established. . . .

"Where, for example, shall we draw the line between the man whom we consider to be moody or excitable, and genuine psychopathic manic-depressive? . . .

"A recurrent dream, a neurosis? But surely the normal child in its cot goes through all the symptoms of the neurotic? . . .

"The solution lies in intelligence. That is what distinguishes us from the helpless animals that are caught in their patterns of behavior, both mental and physical" (PM 173-174).

In this way, Martin convinces himself of his sanity. His fears are those of a normal man, merely a recurrence of the fears of his childhood. "'It's like those nights when I was a kid, lying awake thinking the darkness would go on forever,'" Martin thinks. "'And I couldn't go back to sleep because of the dream of whatever it was in the cellar coming out of the corner'" (PM 138). As in the later novels, especially *Free Fall* and *The Pyramid*, Golding becomes somewhat autobiographical in his description of the terrors. He described the horror of his own imagination when it was left unbridled in his essay "The Ladder and the Tree," in which he showed that anguish comes with the dawning awareness of one's surroundings, before the imposition





of patterns of thought. Remembering his own childhood experiences, he vividly described the terrors of nightmares and phobias. He himself had archetypal fears of the dark, the dead, and snakes, and as a small boy suffered pangs of terror for no apparent reason except an overactive imagination. Golding wrote, "My nights were miserable. . . , with every sort of apprehension given a label, and these even so only outliers of a central, not-comprehended dark." He "never dared to stay alone with the gloom" in the cellar of the house, which his father had partially converted into a recreation room. And his fears were multiplied when he imagined the knees of the occupants of the cemetery next door "tucked under our lawn":

The lawn, almost the only uncontaminated place in that ancient neighbourhood, had been sunny and innocent until my deliberate exercise of logic had invited the enemy in.

What was that enemy? I cannot tell. He came with darkness and he reduced me to a shuddering terror that was incurable because it was indescribable.

Then he read Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*:

"I read them with a sort of shackled fascination and recognized their quality, knew they were reports, knew that he and I had been in the same place" (HG 166-70).<sup>28</sup> This "place" is identified in *Free Fall* as "the world of spirit;" and Golding's terror of the cellar with its "crushed wood underground, where a footfall overhead seemed to come down out of another world" is echoed precisely in *Pincher Martin*. Martin comes to realize that "if one went step by step — ignoring the gap of dark and the terror on the lip — back from the rock . . . one went down to the cellar. And the path



led back from the cellar to the rock" (PM 173). All the evil of the imagination is expressed in this "night world, the other world where everything but good could happen, the world of ghosts and robbers and horrors, of things harmless in the daytime coming to life."

The horrors are to be identified with the horrors imagined by the little boys on the island in *Lord of the Flies*, by Sammy Mountjoy in the rectory and in the broom closet in *Free Fall*, by Jocelin in his contemplation of the pit at the crossways in *The Spire*, and by Oliver in his contemplation of Bounce's grave in *The Pyramid*. In his imagination, Martin revisits the cellar, the "well of darkness," sees "coffin ends crushed in the wall," and walks "under the churchyard back through the death door to meet the master" (PM 178).<sup>29</sup>

A madman, says Martin, "'would feel the rock was too hard, too real; he would superimpose a reality, especially if he had too much imagination. He would be capable of seeing the engraving as a split into the whole nature of things — wouldn't he?'" (PM 179). Then he sees a "thing" looming in the darkness, "the heart and being of all imaginable terror," the approach of the recognition of death and the black lightning, whittling away awareness. Martin recalls his theological conversation with Nat, who had warned Martin that he would have to invent a heaven of his own if he was not "ready for the real one": "'Take us as we are now and heaven would be sheer negation. Without form and void. You see? A sort of black lightning, destroying everything that we call life —'" (PM 183).



Associated with the cellar and the coffins is the myth of the maggots — the Chinese legend described by Peter, in which the Chinese bury a fish in a tin box, and maggots eat the fish and then each other until "'where there was a fish there is now one huge, successful maggot,'" which the Chinese dig up and eat (*PM* 136). Pete sees Martin, the "Pincher," who as the epitome of greed "'takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman (i.e., Pete's wife, Helen),' " as the final maggot (*PM* 120,154). "'Have you ever heard a spade knocking on the side of a tin box, Chris? Boom! Boom! Just like thunder'" (*PM* 136). Martin hears the thunder, and it is associated with "Thor's lightning" and the black lightning and the coffins in the cellar (*PM* 188-89, 197-201). Disguise the noise as he might, deep down Martin knows what it represents. "The noise was the grating and thump of a spade against an enormous tin box that had been buried" (*PM* 189). Inevitably, Martin confronts the god his imagination invents, an extension of himself and a "projection" of his mind. "'I have created you and I can create my own heaven,'" he screams, and then adds: "'Suppose I climbed away from the cellar over the bodies of used and defeated people, broke them to make steps on the road away from you, why should you torture me? If I ate them, who gave me a mouth?'" (*PM* 197). Martin tells the god that he prefers his own heaven of illusory existence on the rock, "pain and all," to the inevitable total destruction of the black lightning. Finally, all that is left of Martin's illusory existence is awareness of his hands, the main tools of his



material existence, which at first look like lobsters, and then claws gripping each other. Gradually, the black lightning wears away the rock between the claws until only the claws and the centre are left, "outlined like a night sign against the absolute nothingness."

The lightning came forward. Some of the lines pointed to the centre, waiting for the moment when they could pierce it. Others lay against the claws, playing over them, prying for a weakness, wearing away in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy (*PM* 201).

Thus Pincher Martin, too selfish and greedy and prideful to die respectably, meets his second and final death — the confrontation with nothingness.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Sammy Mountjoy and Jocelin, who have similar experiences of confrontation with God, he never manages to attain grade-one thought, and the insights and epiphany that come with it. His battered body is his only memorial.

#### IV

By contrast to Christopher Martin, Nathaniel Walterson has all the markings not only of a grade-one thinker, but of a seer and a saint. Nathaniel is named after the Apostle without Guile. As a foil for Martin, he is well-named, for Martin is sly, greedy, and traitorous, while Nat, like Simon of *Lord of the Flies*, is unselfish, concerned and loving. He is a tall, thin man, ungainly, impractical, but sensitive. "He would never find his feet in the Navy because those great feet of his had always been away out there, attached by accident while the man inside prayed and waited to meet his aeons" (*PM* 51). He is in effect an adult Simon. Like Simon, he





is misunderstood by his acquaintances, and is viewed as somewhat "batty." Like Simon, he wishes to be alone to think and to pray (PM 54). When he smiles, his is a genuine smile, emanating "spontaneously from the conjectural centre behind the face, evidence of sheer niceness that made the breath come short with maddened liking and rage" (PM 55).

Yet Nat is not as sympathetic a character as Simon, perhaps because he is an adult who is reasonably self-assured in his theological ideas, a man with whom we cannot quite identify if only because he is something of a caricature. Simon, in spite of his epilepsy and inability to communicate, is a cheery little boy, the epitome of innocence. But Nat is unusual in a physical sense; he is physically weak not because he has any physical affliction or quirk of character, but because he is thin and gangly and awkward. He is a man whose whole thrust in life is towards the spiritual, yet he encompasses in his personal philosophy a viable bridge between the physical world, and the spiritual world that he recognizes as being so much more important. Nat is conveyed in a way that makes us view him as somewhat smug in his knowledge; because he is so "right" we feel a measure of contempt for him that Golding probably did not intend to convey. By contrast to Nat, Christopher Martin is a very credible, physical entity to whom we can relate easily as a fallen man; Nat is too good, too nice, too right for us to accept at face value. This weakness in characterization of grade-one thinkers becomes increasingly a flaw in the works of Golding.



Still, Nat's system of theology ultimately cannot be ignored, either by Christopher or by the reader, because Christopher suffers the very hell that Nat predicted for him. Nat is concerned that his friend should change his ways and try to understand that there is more to life than chemistry and sex and logic. Knowing Christopher intuitively, Nat sees that his friend has "'an extraordinary capacity to endure . . . . To achieve heaven - '" (PM 71). Christopher's heaven, Nat realizes, will be "'The sort of heaven we invented for ourselves after death, if we aren't ready for the real one'" (PM 183). Christopher scoffs at Nat's seriousness, but Nat's compassion for Christopher "the Christ bearer" leads him to prophecy akin to Simon's, in halting sentences similar to those of other saintly figures in Golding:

" - And I, have a feeling. Don't laugh, please - but I feel - you could say that I know." Below the eyes the breath came out in a little gasp. Feet scraped.

" - You could say that I know it is important for you personally to understand about heaven - about dying - because in only a few years - " (PM 71).

Nat leaves Christopher to add the unspoken words, "You will be dead."

In "Thinking As a Hobby," Golding wrote that the "sign, seal and charter" of the grade-one thinker was his capacity to create *for himself* a system that fits over the whole of the known universe and copes consistently with both the world of spirit and the physical world. Such a man was Steiner, the theologian and philosopher, whom Golding called "the faithful thinker." Like Steiner, Nat creates a system that bridges the physical and spiritual worlds. He manifests



none of the prejudices, hypocrisy and ignorance of grade-three thought. He is humble and gentle and kind and genuine. Golding's sympathy with Nat's conception of "dying into heaven" is attested to by the very fact that within the context of the novel Nat's prophecy, stemming from his intuitive insight and overview of the nature of things, turns out to be devastatingly true.

Nathaniel, like Simon, has an affinity with the stars, and his philosophy, resembling Golding's own, reflects his concern for experiencing and understanding the timelessness and infinity of the universe. Indeed, Golding has said that Nat's theology is the "key to the book" (*TC* 70). "'Our lives must reach right back to the roots of time, be a trail through history,'" Nathaniel says. He and Christopher are "connected in the elements." So are Nat and Mary, who intuitively accept each other in marriage:

"There came that sudden flash, that — stab of knowledge and certainty that said, 'I have known you before.'"

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"She felt it too. She said so. She's so — wise, you know! And now we are both quite certain. These things are written in the stars, of course, but under them, Chris, we have to thank you for bringing us together" (*PM* 155-57).

The final irony of this passage speaks for itself.

We recall what Golding had to say about Rudolf Steiner when he reviewed a collection of essays commemorating the philosopher-theologian's death:

We are a foolish and ignorant race and have got ourselves tied up in a tape-measure. One man who spent his life fighting the Laocoon ligatures of the tape-measure was Rudolf Steiner . . . .





There have been many seers in history, men who claimed knowledge on two or perhaps more levels of perception. We tend to treat them with a mixture of contempt and compassion. . . .

We cannot treat Rudolf Steiner in this way. His seership was exercised in the broad daylight of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His life coincided with the great days of rationalism. It was a head-on collision . . . . To Steiner, thinking itself is a spiritual activity, a kind of celestial dance that the sons of the morning are performing in the mind of man. Therefore philosophy and science, with their exercise of the strict forms of thought, are a direct way into communion with God.<sup>31</sup>

Golding added that today, "there is a deep desire in the mind of people to break out of the globe of their own skulls, and find the significance in the cosmos that mere measurement misses." He continued:

Any man who claims to have found a bridge between the world of the physical sciences and the world of the spirit is sure of a hearing. Is this not because most of us have an unexpressed faith that the bridge exists, even if we have not the wit to discover it?<sup>32</sup>

Simon and Fa discovered the bridge through natural religion and a deep understanding of both worlds, and a determination to discover the truth. Tuami found it in the artistry of the haft of his knife. Nat discovers the bridge by contemplating the spiritual world with all its blended compassion and mercilessness, never losing sight of the realities of the physical world that Christopher Martin represents. All of them come to share that quality of thought that in Golding's estimation was "first-grade."



## CHAPTER FIVE: FREE FALL

### I

Criticism of *Free Fall* was negative in its emphasis from the beginning, if only because it was not the type of novel that critics of Golding had expected: here he did not follow the now familiar patterns of fable that had become his hallmark. Moreover, in spite of the novel's title, there is little relationship between the fictional mode of *Free Fall* and that of the earlier works. *Free Fall* is very much in the tradition of the "experimental" novel of the 1920's, concerned as it is with time, memory, and the capturing of Mountjoy's stream of consciousness:

Time is two modes. The one is an effortless perception native to us as water to the mackerel. The other is a memory, a sense of shuffle fold and coil, of that day nearer than that because more important, of that event mirroring this, or those three set apart, exceptional and out of the straight line altogether . . . .  
    . . . The mind cannot hold more than so much; but understanding requires a sweep that takes in the whole remembered time and then can pause (*FF* 6-7).

It may be remarked of the technique of *Free Fall* that if this is an experiment, Proust and Richardson performed it more convincingly, and at least they were original. But the experiment was relatively new for Golding, and is a continuation and extension of the process he used in writing *Pincher Martin*. He used the stream-of-consciousness and time-flux techniques as tools to convey the torment of a



fallen soul, to trace the life of Sammy Mountjoy in innocence and in experience, to define the nature of his guilt, to isolate his sin, to show the path to redemption, and on a more practical level, to take his subject a plane higher than he could achieve in his fables. Mountjoy is in this way portrayed as a complex man interacting with other people in a complex social environment, a man torn between two worlds, both of which he comes to perceive as valid.

The "experiment" drew both praise and condemnation. Frank MacShane wrote, "While Mr. Golding may be indebted to Ford Madox Ford for the time-shift and to James Joyce for the interior monologue, he combines both these techniques with an ease and readability that is in itself an original achievement."<sup>1</sup> John Wain attacked the novel for the same reasons; he found the technique of *Free Fall* and *Ulysses* alike "claustrophobic" and "bullying."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately most of the criticism of *Free Fall* to date has been very superficial, and some critics have been blatantly misleading in their assessment and reading of the novel. Bernard F. Dick, for example, demonstrated the pitfalls of not reading the novel closely enough. In his book *William Golding* he wrote,

Sammy is then put into a cell where subtle mental torture is applied. He is in complete darkness and alone except for a *piece of cold flesh* that lies obscenely on the prison floor. *The exact nature of the flesh is never specified, but it may very well have been genital*; thus Sammy's fears are even more intensified at the prospect



of castration. The "center" of his world, to use one of Golding's favourite words, was clearly anatomically limited.<sup>3</sup>

A more careful reading on Dick's part would have revealed that the "piece of flesh" was merely a projection of Sammy's own mind (FF 138-39), and that the object at the centre of the cell is a wet rag (FF 192). A similar error occurs in a footnote on *Free Fall* that Dick included in his article "*The Pyramid: Mr. Golding's 'New' Novel.*" Referring to the use of the name "Evie," Dick wrote, "Of course, the Golding aficionado might think of another Evie, the memory child who urinated her way through the early chapters of *Free Fall*."<sup>4</sup> Dick here confuses Evie, the fantasist with whom Sammy was enamoured as a boy, with Minnie, the retarded child who was castigated as an "animal" when she wet herself in class (FF 28).

Three of the best works of criticism came from Oldsey and Weintraub, Ted E. Boyle, and Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes. Oldsey and Weintraub traced analogous passages between *Free Fall* and Camus' *The Fall*, implying an indebtedness on the part of Golding that, in the face of it, seems difficult to deny.<sup>5</sup> Boyle's explication of *Free Fall* made some interesting observations on the significance of characterization of Sammy Mountjoy from an existential viewpoint. The epigram of the article is from Viktor E. Frankl, *From Death Camp to Existentialism*:

Man grows according to his interpretation of himself . . . . We have only to remember how in recent history the concept of man as





"nothing but" the product of heredity and environment — or, as it was then termed, "blood and soil" — pushed us all into enormous disasters. I believe it to be a straight path from that homunculist image of man to the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek.<sup>6</sup>

This point has been made not only by Frankl but by Golding and Sartre as well. But Boyle shows the relationship of the passage specifically to *Free Fall*, which he calls "a novel in which the fate of the protagonist, Sammy Mountjoy, is universalized and made to serve as a commentary on the dilemma of twentieth-century man":

Sammy Mountjoy, because of his rationalist vision of human existence, destroys another human being, just as during World War II the nations of the world, imprisoned by the same limited view of human existence, destroyed millions.<sup>7</sup>

Boyle points out that in Sammy's deification of lust, "his perverse worship of the sensual is only a manifestation of his shallow rationalism, which is in turn a result of two fears — fear that there is some reality beyond the rationalism he recognizes, and a consequent fear of accepting responsibility for his decisions." Boyle compares *Free Fall* with Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, and Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus." This last analogy is interesting, since Boyle regards the Sammy who is torn between two worlds at the end of the novel as having realized "the absurd": "Sammy cannot imagine Sisyphus happy, yet the fact that Sammy has an overpowering desire to find some sort of order in his existence is an indication that he will continue searching until



he defines his relation to the universe in which he exists."<sup>8</sup>

Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes elucidate the novel in terms of the Loss of Freedom, the abdication of responsibility, and moral choice, but primarily in terms of Being and Becoming, used in a very special way:

The novel is the result of Golding's need to explore the tensions between Being and Becoming which *Pincher Martin* had raised for him, but which he could not deal with in that form. How does a man become what he is? How can he be said to choose? If he is first free, then locked in Being, where is freedom lost? <sup>9</sup>

As an innocent child, Sammy was "locked into" a mode of Being, they suggest, but it is a different Being than that of Sammy the narrator. Between the Being as Sammy the boy and the Being as Sammy the man, there is, as in *Pincher Martin*, "a gap of non-being" in which Sammy the boy *becomes* Sammy the man, through his existential choice to possess the very Being of Beatrice to the extent that he proclaims, "I want to be you!" The difference between the pattern of Becoming "where cause and effect operate, man chooses and becomes what he chooses by acting," and the pattern of Being in which "man chooses to be one thing or another, and this determines all his actions," is the difference between the physical world and the spiritual world for Golding, the critics suggest. Hence neither pattern will do on its own. "Being and Becoming cross at the moment of free fall, where Sammy becomes what he chooses. They cross again at the moment of resurrection, when the lips utter the cry in the cell."<sup>10</sup>



It is not a matter of taking an "If-or" position as Sammy does when he deliberates, over the projected image of Beatrice Ifor's body, which world he would choose. Neither is it a matter of taking an "either-or" position as does Halde. "The moment we fail Golding's challenge and 'reduce' the cryptograms, we too are on the slippery slope. It is only in riddle, in dense opacity, total ambiguity, that things can be seen as they really are."<sup>11</sup>

In spite of this conclusion of Gregor and Kinhead-Weekes, it can be demonstrated that in *Free Fall*, as in all his other novels, Golding used his concept of three grades of thought to help him in his characterization. Although Gregor and Kinhead-Weekes do not use Golding's terminology, there is a clear link between the novelist's idea of grades of thought and the critics' concept of "Being" and "Becoming." In *Free Fall*, grade-three thought is affiliated with the mode of Being, grade-two thought with the mode of Becoming, and grade-one thought is to be seen in the very apprehension of the "dense opacity" and sheer complexity of the "riddle" of life. Indeed, criticism of this novel, more than that of any of the other works, has focused on Golding's use of the conflict of "reason" and "spirit" and on the ways in which Golding portrays the possibility of transcending both worlds in the process of coming to terms with them. This focus in criticism reflects the fact that more obviously than any other of Golding's novels, *Free Fall* deals with the conflict of the physical and spiritual worlds





that coexist in the cosmos. The title itself is ambiguous, reflecting both worlds, as Golding has noted:

Everybody has translated this in terms of theology; well, okay, you can do it that way, which is why it's not a bad title, but it is in fact a scientific term. It is where your gravity has *gone*; it is a man in a space ship who has no gravity; things don't fall or lift, they float about; he is completely divorced from the other idea of a thing up *there* and centered on *there* in which he lives.

Do you see what I mean? Where for hundreds of thousands of years men have known where they were, now they don't know where they are any longer. This is the point of *Free Fall* . . . . There is also the Miltonic idea; there is also the Genesis idea; there is also the ordinary daily life idea of something which is "for free," and something which is also "fall." "Free" and "fall" are both caught up in it (TC 81-82).

The "Miltonic idea" to which Golding alluded is the doctrine outlined in the third book of *Paradise Lost*, in which God says of man,

So will fall  
Hee and his faithless Progeny: whose fault?  
Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of mee  
All he could have; I made him just and right,<sup>12</sup>  
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

## II

Unlike Adam, Sammy Mountjoy is not born in Paradise -- although at the time of his writing the first chapter of what is to become his autobiography Sammy lives on Paradise Hill (FF 5). Like Adam, he is born not into sin but into innocence, and not until he reaches adolescence does he fall into sin and guilt. His



early innocence resides in his almost mindless acceptance of things, in his inability consciously to sin. In his prelapsarian idolization of his mother, Sammy is as much a worshipper of Ma as the Neanderthals of *The Inheritors* were of Oa:

Ma spreads as I remember her, she blots out the room and the house, her wide belly expands, she is seated in her certainty and indifference more firmly than in a throne. She is the unquestionable, the not good, not bad, not kind, not bitter. She looms down the passages I have made in time.

She is terrified but she does not frighten.

She neglects but she does not warp or exploit.

She is violent without malice or cruelty.

She is adult without patronage or condescension.

She is warm without possessiveness.

But above all, she is there (FF 13).

Whether she is caught with her pants down in the lavatorial "bog" or swilling in the bar, Ma is always "there", grounded firmly in the physical world, essentially an innocent in spite of her incontinence, representing the pole of the physical world in the polarity between body and soul that always haunts Mountjoy.

Mountjoy is always the fulcrum between the worlds of spirit and matter, and while Ma is matter, Evie represents the world of spirit in these early days: "My twin towers were Ma and Evie" (FF 23).

Evie, the fantasist, supplies the young Sammy with a surfeit of material for bad dreams. "Her stories took wing to themselves. I know now that I was privileged to see a soul spread out before me" (FF 25).



Moving out of Evie's shadow as he grew older, Sammy became "the inhabitant of two linked worlds": school and Rotten Row, and it is at school that Sammy makes friends with Johnny Spragg and Philip Arnold, the other two sides of what Mountjoy came to refer to as "our masculine triangle" (FF 36). Again Sammy becomes the fulcrum between the other two, serving first as Johnny's friend and then as Philip's protector. Their schoolyard battles resemble closely the squabbles of the boys in *Lord of the Flies*: the uncomplicated and innocent Johnny approximates Ralph, the bullying Sammy approximates Jack, and the "curious and complicated" Philip approximates Roger (FF 38). In spite of the fact that Sammy is the school Bully (as indeed Golding was in his school days),<sup>13</sup> Philip is "far more dangerous than any of us." Like Roger, who, faced with a choice between Ralph and Jack, became Jack's henchman and the cruelest of all of the savages, Philip "loved fighting when anyone else was being hurt."

"If Johnny and I were fighting, Philip would come running and dance about, flapping his hands. When there was a heaving pile in the playground, our pale, timid Philip would be moving round the outside, giggling and kicking the tenderest piece he could reach. He liked to inflict pain and a catastrophe was his orgasm" (FF 38).

Yet Philip is nominally a Christian. His upbringing has been religious, and he is still tormented by the religious beliefs which cut so deeply into his freedom. "In his clever, tortuous mind, religion swam up out of deceit and gooseberry bush into



awful power" (FF 44). Philip becomes the convert not of reason or the world of matter, but rather of the devil, the negation of the goodness of the church to which he avowedly belongs. For religion "menaced his knowledge of people, his selfishness . . . . If what they said was true, and not just another bit of parental guff then what future was there for Philip? What of the schemes, the diplomacy? What of the careful manipulations of other people?" (FF 45). Intelligent as he may be, Philip has all the earmarks of a grade-three thinker: hypocrisy, prejudice, ignorance, and illogical hatred. When he smiles, it is a "localized convulsion of the sphincter" rather than a genuine smile from "the man inside" (FF 77).

At the peak of his malice against the church to which he nominally adheres, he cajoles Sammy into desecrating the altar: "Philip led the way with his dance and flap and I followed in the net" (FF 46). Once in the church, "I was nothing but singing teeth and jumping skin and hair that crawled without orders. Philip was as bad. His need must have been deep indeed" (FF 47). After a "fierce and insane argument" in which Philip calls Sammy a coward, Sammy tries to urinate on the high altar, but cannot because he has already "been" three times on his way to church.

Philip raged at me out of the darkness,  
 raged weakly, vilely, cleverly -- my brother.  
 "All right then. I can't pee. But I  
 can spit" (FF 47).





In Philip we see utter wickedness, wickedness beyond simple guilt, as Mountjoy himself says. The fact that he does so well in politics — becoming by devious means a minister of state (FF 77) — is telling in light of what Golding has said about politicians in relation to Jack:

I always suspect, have always perhaps instinctively feared, have always — *suspected* is the word — anyone who wants power. This is one of the reasons why politicians, no matter how good, are suspect to me . . . . It seems to be the dilemma we are faced with that, on the whole, the politician is likely to be a Jack and, at best, a Ralph — never a Simon (TC 48-49).

Evie had been "a congenital liar" (FF 26), and Philip a malicious manipulator. But neither representative of the world of spirit had as much effect on Mountjoy as the adult grade-three thinkers who replace them. Vivid in Mountjoy's youthful imagination are the words and accompanying gestures of Miss Massey, a teacher of elementary religion, who helps temper Mountjoy's attitude towards the spiritual world. Mountjoy recalls an incident in which Miss Massey, a typical grade-three thinker, punished Johnny for missing the point of her religion lesson. Hypocritically, she resorted not to Christian love but to violence:

Miss Massey hit him on both sides of the head, precisely with either hand, a word and a blow.

"God — "

Smack!

" — is — "

Smack!

" — love!"

Smack! Smack! Smack! (FF 44).



In spite of this lesson in hypocrisy (which surely must be one of the most succinct and concise portraits of the process of grade-three thought anywhere in Golding) Sammy remains an innocent believer, even as a student under Miss Pringle, who rules her class "not by love but by fear," and who hates Sammy "partly because I was hateful and partly because she was hateful and partly because she had a crush on Father Watts-Watt — who had adopted me instead of marrying her" (FF 147). Her hypocrisy is accentuated in her sadistic use of sarcasm, "cruel, unfair and vicious" (FF 148). Golding's description of Miss Pringle reminds us of his own teacher, Miss Parsons, whom he has identified as a grade-three thinker:

There was Miss Parsons. She assured us that her dearest wish was our welfare, but I knew even then, with the mysterious clairvoyance of childhood, that what she wanted most was the husband she never got (TH 11).

Miss Pringle is the direct cause of Sammy's abandonment of the world of spirit and his acceptance of rationalism as a way of life. She deliberately misconstrues Sammy's serious attempts to interpret the Biblical account of Moses and the burning bush, and accuses Mountjoy, incorrectly, of "searching through the Bible with a snigger." She is "clever and perceptive and compelled and cruel" (FF 154) just like Philip, or Jack of *Lord of the Flies*, and her hypocrisy reaches its apogee when she searches through the private and sacred pages of Sammy's rough notebook with more than a mere



snigger, rather with malice, until she stumbles on a landscape which the artistic Sammy has drawn, consisting of hills and an elaborate woodlot in the centre. Unknown to him, the drawing, when turned on its side at an angle, looks vaguely like the shape of a human body with elaborately-drawn adult genitalia, with which at this point the innocent Mountjoy is completely unfamiliar. Miss Pringle greets her discovery, which is simply a projection of her own guilty mind, with "passionate anger, with outrage and condemnation", and infers that Mountjoy has brought into her "garden" "weeds and slugs and snails and hideous slimy crawling things" — the objectification of her own hideous slimy crawly thoughts (*FF* 156). Mountjoy is referred to his headmaster, who, in a scene very close to Golding's recollection of his visits to the headmaster in "Thinking As a Hobby", realizes that the alleged obscenity is Miss Pringle's own invention stemming from within her own guilty imagination. Yet she has the gall, as had Miss Massey before her, to preach the virtues of love and the meaning of the crucifixion of Christ. In retrospect, Mountjoy ponders,

But how could she crucify a small boy, tell  
him that he sat out away from the others  
because he was not fit to be with them and  
then tell the story of that other crucifixion  
with every evidence in her voice of sorrow  
for human cruelty and wickedness? I can  
understand how she hated, but not how she kept  
on such apparent terms of intimacy with heaven  
(*FF* 159).

Mountjoy would have adopted the way of the spirit, but he





associated it with the grade-three thought of Miss Pringle, and "the beauty of Miss Pringle's cosmos was vitiated because she was a bitch" (FF 171).

Even at home, Sammy finds that he must cope with hypocrisy and grade-three thought, for Father Watts-Watt, his guardian since his mother's death, is a latent homosexual whose love for Sammy is not merely Christian (FF 121). Even on his first evening at the manse, Father Watts-Watt tried to break into the bathroom while Sammy sat naked bathing in the tub, and he enters Sammy's room without warning, trying to catch a glimpse of the boy off guard. Sitting beside him on his bed, Watts-Watt pants like a dog (FF 121) and then with refined hypocrisy warns Sammy to pray "as a protection from wicked thoughts which all people had no matter how good they were" (FF 120). He stops short of kissing Sammy, but searches for an excuse to do so and has to force himself to leave hastily before he gets carried away. Like Jocelin of *The Spire*, Father Watts-Watt is mad. "He had a developing persecution mania, and presently the world saw him less and less" (FF 122).

He watched me from far off to see if I would communicate with [his imaginary] enemies; or perhaps he wrapped me into his fantasies because that was a way of concealing his true motives from himself. On some involved level he pretended to be mad in order to evade the responsibility for his own frightening desires and compulsions . . . .

. . . Father Watts-Watt brought into his mania all the features of existence as it appeared to him, just as Evie had brought in hers (FF 122-23).



Father Watts-Watt is "incapable of approaching a child straight because of the ingrown and festering desires that poisoned him" (FF 124). More and more, Father Anselm has to take over his duties while Father Watts-Watt wages "an awful battle that raged year in year out in his study where I could sometimes hear him groaning" (FF 124).

Sammy Mountjoy's retrospective analysis of his childhood turns up a whole series of hypocritical, malicious, and frankly manic people, all associated, coincidentally, with the world of spirit as manifest in religion. It is away from these people and the quality of their thought, not from the world of spirit itself, that Sammy turns. They all contribute to his fall; in a sense they egg him on to jump. But the final decision to jump, to fall into guilt and sin, has to be his own. However much he is "persecuted" by the Miss Pringles of his youth, the final decision is Sammy's. This idea Golding shares with Sartre, who wrote in *The Republic of Silence*:

We were never more free than during the German occupation . . . . Everywhere . . . we encountered the revolting and insipid picture of ourselves that our suppressors wanted us to accept. And because of all this we were free. Because the Nazi venom seeped into our thoughts, every accurate thought was a conquest . . . . And the choice that each of us made of his life was an authentic choice.<sup>14</sup>

Sartre implied that the total and absolute freedom of man is the ultimate and final freedom to say "No."



There is no question as to which world Sammy belongs to naturally. He insists, in his projected apostrophe to a senile Miss Pringle, that he was of her world, and innocent to boot, when she undermined his faith. He had been of her world when he listened to Evie — and believed. He was of that world when, trespassing in the general's garden on Paradise Hill on what was to become the grounds of the asylum where Beatrice must spend the rest of her days, he had an apocalyptic vision of the cedar tree that quite escaped the practical Johnny:

We were in the upper part of the garden, looking back and down. The moon was flowering. She had a kind of sanctuary of light round her, sapphire. All the garden was black and white. There was one tree between me and the lawns, the stillest tree that ever grew, a tree that grew when no one was looking. The trunk was huge and each branch splayed up to a given level; and there, the black leaves floated out like oil on water. Level after horizontal level these leaves cut across the splayed branches and there was a crumpled, silver-paper depth, in ivory quiet beyond them. Later, I should have called the tree a cedar and passed on, but then, it was an apocalypse (*FF* 35-36).

Here, we are on Paradise Hill, and the garden is Eden with its "sanctuary of light." The fantastic tree in the middle of the garden is surely parallel to the Tree of Knowledge, with its multi-tiered branches; and the contrasts between black and white and oil and water seem to be analogues of good and evil. In a sense, just visiting the garden is for Sammy picking the forbidden fruit, for his visit is an illicit one, and the walls are guarded by a



policeman. But he has seen the world of spirit and has partaken of it.

Sammy is free to fall, but first he has to make a momentous decision: to reject the world of spirit because of a psychological association of it with liars, hypocrites and guilt-ridden and sinful people. He withdraws from the world of spirit that is his natural haunt into a physical world that is alien to his nature. He withdraws "with eyes and ears open" to the possible consequences. And soon he finds himself deeply entrenched, committed to a system of grade-two thought.

### III

Opposite Evie and her high-flown fantasies stood Ma. Opposite Philip and his religious torment stood Johnny, who was immersed in the physical world of mechanics and air planes, and who "had a capacity . . . of absorbing highly technical knowledge through the pores of his skin" (FF 29). Opposite Miss Pringle and her hypocrisy stands Nick Shales who is so committed to the material world that he "denied the spirit behind creation" (FF 190). Between each set of polarities, Sammy Mountjoy hung in suspension, in "free fall", trying to cope with both worlds and never quite succeeding. Such, in Golding's opinion, is the human dilemma, as he has gone to some pains to convey:

I do want to try and put this over —  
because it is important to me — that, as





experience, it seems to me that we do live in two worlds. There is this physical one, which is coherent, and there is a spiritual one. To the average man — with his flashes of religious experience, if you like to call them that — that world is very often incoherent. But nevertheless, as a matter of experience, for me and I suspect for millions of other people, this experience of having two worlds to live in all the time — or not all the time, [but] occasionally — is a vital one and is what living is like. And that is why this book is important to me, because I've tried to put those two worlds into it, as a matter of daily experience . . . (TC 79).<sup>15</sup>

Neither the world of Rowena Pringle nor the world of Nick Shales is satisfactory to Sammy because to accept one is to deny the other, and Sammy recognizes the reality of both worlds:

All day long the trains run on rails. Eclipses are predictable. Penicillin cures pneumonia and the atom splits to order. All day long, year in, year out, the daylight explanation drives back the mystery and reveals a reality usable, understandable and detached. The scalpel and the microscope fail, the oscilloscope moves closer to behaviour. The gorgeous dance is self-contained, then; does not need the music which in my mad moments I have heard. Nick's universe is real.

All day long action is weighed in the balance and found not opportune nor fortunate or ill-advised, but good or evil. For this mode which we must call the spirit breathes through the universe and does not touch it; touches only the dark things, held prisoner, incommunicado, touches, judges, sentences and passes on.

Her world was real, both worlds are real. There is no bridge (FF 191-92).

Golding has explained that this final observation of Sammy is



"an attempt to put the other version, the two contrasting views of life, neither of which really makes sense because the other exists. Either, on its own, makes sense, but when you've got them both there — and this *is* the situation — neither one taken alone does" (TC 82). Nevertheless, the young Sammy believes that he must make a choice rather than attempt to discover ways of living that might satisfactorily account for both worlds.

Sammy is in a position to recognize that Nick Shales's unidimensional world contains fundamental contradictions. Can it explain the burning bush? Can it explain Sammy's nightmares, his nyctophobia when "fear was spasms, any of which might have made me faint clean away if I had known of that refuge; and when, gasping for air, the disarranged clothes allowed me a glimpse of the glimmering window, the church tower looked in like an awful head"? (FF 119). Can it explain his "irrational fear of ghosts and horrors"? (FF 146). Sammy realizes that Nick, in his denial of the spirit behind creation, was denying the very thing that Sammy himself found "nearest to the eye" (FF 162):

To give up the burning bush, the water from the rock, the spittle on the eyes was to give a portion of myself, a dark and inward and fruitful portion. Yet looking at me from the bush was the fat and freckled face of Miss Pringle. The other world, the cool and reasonable, was home to the friendly face of Nick Shales . . . . Miss Pringle vitiated her teaching. She failed to convince, not by what she said but by what she was. Nick persuaded me to his natural scientific universe by what he was, not by what he said (FF 164).



Nick's world is accepted for the wrong reasons, because Nick is a mild-tempered and loving man, "the best teacher I ever knew" (FF 159). In Nick's world, no problems were insoluble, for "to Nick the rationalist, the atheist, all things are possible" (FF 162).

Nick is a grown up Piggy, a technocrat. He had already been caricatured in "Envoy Extraordinary" as Phanocles, and it is likely that Golding had his own father in mind. Golding has admitted to a link between his own life and that of Sammy Mountjoy:

I said to myself, "You were in the navy; well, this man has to be in the army. You are a writer; you'll have to make this man a painter." And so, all the way round, the whole thing was an invention in much the same way that *Envoy Extraordinary* was an invention (TC 80).

Golding has called his father a scientific rationalist who, while having a profound religious feeling, had "no religious beliefs":

. . . He couldn't. He was brought up short every five minutes. . . . He was always stunned by the fact of things, do you see, and so, although he said he was a rationalist, I think, nevertheless, this was in many ways a matter of profound regret for him (TC 83).

Nick's optimistic view of the universe is contagious.

"His law spread," writes Mountjoy. "I saw it holding good at all times and in all places" (FF 164). Accordingly, Sammy gives up his fantasy world of miracles and imagination. In doing so, he does not act rationally. In fact, Sammy merely follows Nick's own footsteps, for Nick too had adopted his universe for the wrong reasons — in reaction to the Victorian concept of Jehovah, the





male totem of the Hebrews, the god of violence and revenge (FF 190). He had withdrawn into the hard shell of the physical world, until he had deluded himself that the world of spirit did not exist. Co-existent with his rationalism is a natural philosophy tempered with the optimism of the nineteenth century. The son of a Christian cobbler, Nick had been grounded firmly in an unquestioned moral code. Faced with a moral problem, he appeals to an illogical code of morality. When Sammy asks him a few questions about "sex and all that," Nick's reaction is strictly illogical:

"I don't believe in anything but what I can touch and see and weigh and measure. But if the Devil had invented man he couldn't have played him a dirtier, wickeder, a more shameful trick than when he gave him sex" (FF 175).

Again Nick appears to be close in character to Golding's father, of whom Golding said,

. . . He did have a profoundly . . . we'll call it habitual moral view of life. This is the odd thing: he ended up with a kind of system, as I firmly believe that rationalists and many others do, a system in which there was no place, logically, for right and wrong. But all the same, right and wrong were there. Do you see, he was a profoundly moral man (TC 84-85).

This paradox has already been noted with reference to Piggy's concern for the "system" represented by the conch.

Sammy, like Golding, recognizes the flaw in Nick's logic. Unimpeded by a separately-formulated moral philosophy, he can extend his own brand of rationalism to its logical extreme. Having slammed the door shut on Moses and Jehovah, Sammy comes to an



hypothesis that leads to his fall:

I saw that if man is the highest, his own creator, then good and evil is decided by majority vote. Conduct is not good or bad, but discovered or got away with (FF 165).

Coupled with this new philosophy is the rationalistic belief that *Homo sapiens* is merely an advanced species of mammal; therefore fellow human beings, as fellow mammals, are exploitable — in Pincher Martin's words, ripe for the eating. In the natural world, the musk of mating is the greatest good for the greatest number, the categorical imperative of continued existence. Therefore Mountjoy, as animal, can easily determine his destiny:

Musk, shameful and heady, be thou my good.  
Musk on Beatrice who knows nothing of it,  
thinks nothing of it, is contained and cool,  
is years from mating if ever, and with another  
man. Musk if man is only an animal, must be  
my good because that is the standard of all  
animals. He is the great male who keeps the  
largest herd for himself (FF 175-76).

Before Sammy left school for the last time, his headmaster had given him a "dangerous" piece of advice which helped Sammy mould his future and weigh the consequences of his conduct:

"If you want something enough, you can always get it provided you are willing to make the appropriate sacrifice. Something, anything. But what you get is never quite what you thought; and sooner or later the sacrifice is always regretted" (FF 178).

Sammy wants to possess "the white unseen body of Beatrice Ifor, her obedience . . .; and for the pain she had caused me, her utter abjection this side death" (FF 178). These are words of obsession



and mingled hatred and lust worthy of a Christopher Martin. In a final baptism into sin, Sammy bathes and masturbates in the weir. Then he declares what he is willing to sacrifice for Beatrice's "white body":

"Everything" (*FF* 179).

His decision marks the point where Sammy Mountjoy loses his freedom, the moment in his life where he withdraws from his natural world, the world of spirit, finally and utterly, with eyes and ears open. It marks the point in time when he adopts grade-two thought and all its attendant cynicism. It is the moment in his life he has been searching for in his free fall through his personal history and memories.

Thereafter, he clings with dogged determination to Beatrice's heels, like Martin feigning madness if she will not make love. The parallel between the two women is worth drawing here, because Mary is an archetype for almost all of Golding's female characters:

There was the individual, Mary, who was nothing but the intersection of influence from the cradle up, the Mary gloved and hatted for church, the Mary who ate with much maddening refinement, the Mary who carried, poised on her two little feet, a treasure of demoniac and musky attractiveness that was all the more terrible because she was almost unconscious of it (*PM* 134-135).

Mary, like Beatrice, is unwittingly sensuous, if only because she is innocent and has "isled virtue" and thus is a challenge and a torment to fallen men such as Chris.



When she refuses to sleep with Chris, Mary's answer is to him an "ultimate insult of triumph, understanding, and compassion.

"I'm sorry, Chris. Genuinely sorry."

"You'll be a sister to me, I know."

But then the astonishing answer, serenely, brushing away the sarcasm.

"If you like" (*PM* 137).

Sammy's initial reaction to Beatrice is similar:

I saw in her face what I can neither describe nor draw. Say she was beautiful to me. Say that her face summed up and expressed innocence without fatuity, bland femininity without the ache of sex (*FF* 167-168).

Innocent Beatrice soon becomes the target of Mountjoy's cynicism, which is a product of his second-grade thought. We remember

Golding's own escapade with the innocent Ruth:

There was Ruth, for example, a serious and attractive girl. I was an atheist at the time. Grade-two thinking is a menace to religion and knocks down sects like skittles. I put myself in a position to be converted by her with an hypocrisy worthy of grade three. She was a Methodist — or at least, her parents were, and Ruth had to follow suit (*TH* 11).

Golding describes hilariously the argument that followed, which led up to his attempting too amorously to press his advantage:

I lost Ruth and gained an undeserved reputation as a potential libertine (*TH* 12).

Mountjoy deserves such a reputation, although only after two years of whittling away at Beatrice's virtue does he gain unilateral access to her body.

In order to comprehend the extent of Mountjoy's depravity





and the grip that his commitment to a cheap, second-grade thought holds on him, we must appreciate how much effort was required on his part to possess and ruin Beatrice. At the beginning, when Mountjoy greets her with pretense rivalling that of the fourteen-year-old Golding with Ruth, she was "harmless, docile and sweet," an "angel of the annunciation," "untouched and unapproachable" (FF 168). Like Mary and Ruth, she attends chapel. Her clear, untroubled eyes are "honest because the price of dishonesty had never been offered to her. I looked into them, sensed their merciless and remote purity" (FF 67). He soon learns that his only rival is God Himself (FF 72).

And so Sammy finds himself in the position of having to wage war with God, using Beatrice as a battleground. He seeks to replace God at the centre of her cosmos. Her ultimate answer, unlike Mary's firm "No", is a tentative "Maybe". Yet "her emotions and physical reactions were enclosed as a nun." He uses all his charm and rational, grade-two tricks of persuasion and logic to probe her being, but "she herself was hidden. All the time I knocked and then hammered at the door she remained shut up within" (FF 85).

After their engagement to be married, Sammy's seduction techniques move into high gear. But even his seduction chamber, a bed sitting room, does not at first allow him access to her centre. She remains physically aloof, close to her God. "Beatrice



belonged to my only rival. Her body, therefore, was not hers to give. This she thought, this she acted upon" (FF 88). When Mountjoy says that he will go mad if she does not give in, he stumbles on her Achilles' heel: she reacts with alarm. Playing for her compassion, Sammy pretends to be mad, and Beatrice soon "opens her knees" to him out of sheer sympathy. Relenting, "she lay back obediently, closed her eyes and placed one clenched fist bravely on her forehead as though she were about to be injected for T.A.B." (FF 90).

But now that Sammy, through deceit and pretense, has won the place of God he stands at the centre of her cosmos in His place. In giving up her free will to Mountjoy she does what Mary never did; the Self that had been occupied by God becomes occupied by Sammy — her new God, her "ultimate concern." She grows more and more dependent upon him, an obedient dog, a mere object, obeying his every whim. After two years, Sammy abandons her for the much more physical Taffy. Neglected, Beatrice has nobody — not God, not Sammy — to fill the centre of her cosmos. In a panic she searches for Sammy, even going to Nick for help. But with nothing to fill the centre, she has no point of reference in the real world and is driven insane, to "utter abjection this side death." She becomes reduced to "a thing", to a sack of bumpy flesh, coarse and harmless, who moves only in jerks and whose eyes are "entombed" and "nittering." Having rejected God for Sammy,



and then having been rejected by Sammy, she is forced to live in the hell of a mental asylum, ironically on Paradise Hill, in a state resembling that of "perpetual worry." When Sammy tries to communicate with her during his post-war visit she urinates on the floor, splashing his shoes and trousers, an act which brings nausea to his throat (FF 184). He realizes that he must live with his guilt, the product of his species of second-grade thought, since Beatrice is in no position to forgive him. In using Beatrice as he did, he has become a Sartrean "*salaud*", an object of nausea, and here he is shown the product of his existential decision to use an Other as a "thing."

Just as Pincher Martin is forced to meet his "judge" in the form of a god created in his own image, so Mountjoy is confronted while a prisoner of war with a "judge" who shares his barren philosophy and attitude towards life. But whereas Sammy's was an artificial and incomplete commitment to the world of science, Halde's commitment is total to the point of asceticism. His voice is the "voice of the divorced idea, a voice that might be conveyed better by the symbols of mathematics than printed words" (FF 103). He becomes to Sammy what Sammy had been to Beatrice: Halde has been putting himself in Sammy's place just as Sammy attempted to "be" Beatrice. And, like Beatrice, Sammy replies to his own question, "Do you feel nothing then?" with a tentative "Maybe" (FF 108). Halde, like Mountjoy, at some point in his past had to make a





momentous decision that marked the point of his fall. Knowing war to be "fundamentally immoral," Halde had made the choice for war rather than against. "Accept such international immorality, Mr. Mountjoy, and all unpleasantnesses are possible to man" (FF 106). Halde has withdrawn "with eyes and ears open" into a world of grade-two thought characterized by a brand of behavioral psychology closely linked to the rationalism that Golding abhors. If Sammy is the logical extension of Nick, then Halde is the logical extension of Sammy. By looking at Halde, Sammy can see the full implications of the decision to "accept immorality" as a *modus operandi*.

"Halde" is commonly translated as "slope, declivity, hillside; slag-heap, dump,"<sup>16</sup> words that echo the novel's title. Golding uses the pun to his utmost. "'We're in the sewer together — both of us up to the neck,'" admits Halde. He is at once portrayed as a saint and as a devil. His flesh is "healthy": "The lines were not necessarily the lines of suffering but of thought and good-humour. Taken with the fine hands, the almost translucent fingers and the answer was asceticism. The man had the body of a saint" (FF 103). Yet his Satanic nature is indicated by his temptation of Sammy: "'Well there. I have taken you up to a pinnacle of the temple and shown you the whole earth. And you have refused it'" (FF 112). The image of Halde that we are receiving here is again that of traditional Christian myth:



Very few human beings have the courage, the persistence, the very *asceticism* necessary for the perfect service of Satan — which requires that one perform miracles of darkness, as the saints perform miracles of light . . . . The true Satanist must always have the outward aspect of an angel of light, and will never, under any circumstances, resort to the cruder, violent types of evil. He must be so clever that only an expert in holiness can discern him, for in this way he may far more effectively mislead the sons of men and please his infernal Master, whose supreme craft lies in Deception, and subtle confusion of the truth.<sup>17</sup>

Rather than resorting to unsubtle tortures, Halde assumes with his rationalist mind that Sammy *must* know something about the planned escape, because he was a close friend of Ralph and Nobby, who were shot in the act of escaping. But he senses that there is a mystery to Sammy that he has not fathomed, a mystery that even the temptations of Satan will not touch. With the excuse that "it is the karma of our two nations that we should torture each other," Halde sends Sammy off to be tortured — in a way that Sammy could not predict. Sammy comes to see his situation — and indeed mankind's — as "the ghastly and ferocious play of children who having made a wrong choice or a whole series of them were now helplessly tormenting each other because a wrong use of freedom had lost them their freedom" (FF 114). Both he and Halde independently make their decision to sacrifice everything, one to Beatrice Ifor and the other to the War.

To the extent that Halde intends Sammy's torture to work, to "persuade" Sammy to give up what little information he



knows about the escape, he misjudges Sammy. It is ironic, then, that in his attempt to demoralize Sammy, Halde should give him access to the gift of a rejuvenated vision in the world of spirit — to elevate him to the lofty planes of grade-one thought.

#### IV

The Sammy Mountjoy who introduces himself to us at the beginning of *Free Fall* is a very different person from the Sammy who cringed, perspired and fainted under Halde's interrogation. That man had become little more than his adopted value system would allow him to be, an animal controlled by musk, certainly no match in terms of refinement for Halde, the pure rationalist who confronted him. But Sammy Mountjoy the narrator is much more than an animal, much more even than an "average" human being. He has experienced not only the physical world in a vacuum, but the physical world imbued with a spiritual reality, the place where dog-eared books "have burst with a white hosanna." He has experienced miracles, at once "irrational and incoherent," and yet undeniably real. We have in the narrator not a blundering soldier who would betray his friends if he could, but a sensitive and intelligent artist, a man as refined in mind, although not in body, as the ascetic Halde. The physical body no longer matters to Sammy, "Not the stubbled face of Sammy Mountjoy, the full lips that open to let his hand take out a fag, not the smooth wet muscles inside round teeth, not the gullet, the



lung, the heart — those you could see and touch if you took a knife to him on the table" (FF 7). It is rather the *Scintillans Dei*, the "unnameable, unfathomable and invisible darkness that sits at the centre of him, always awake," that Sammy sees as important; this is the part of Sammy that he seeks to convey to his readers — the essence of his consciousness, containing his memories and the seat of his intelligence, his very Being, his Self.

That Sammy has already achieved what Golding would call grade-one thought is indicated by his rejection of systems of thought — systems that he has already discovered have let him down.

I have hung all systems on the wall like a row of useless hats. They do not fit. They come in from outside, they are suggested patterns, some dull and some of great beauty. But I have lived enough of my life to require a pattern that fits over everything I know; and where shall I find that? Then why do I write this down? Is it a pattern I am looking for? (FF 6).

In the very exercise of writing his book, Mountjoy creates, or discovers, a pattern: "The mind cannot hold more than so much; but understanding requires a sweep that takes in the whole of remembered time and then can pause."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps if I write my story as it appears to me, I shall be able to go back and select. Living is like nothing because it is everything — is too subtle and copious for unassisted thought" (FF 7). Mountjoy, like Golding, is searching for answers, and the very act of creating his book is a patterning of his life so that he, along with his readers, can "see the





connexion between the little boy, clear as spring water, and the man like a stagnant pool" (FF 8).

The process of redemption from the stagnant pool begins with his interview with Dr. Halde, and it is interesting to compare his Nemesis with that of Pincher Martin. As we have seen, both are required to confront gods that are images or logical extensions of themselves. But there are other parallels. Both of them are involved in the Second World War, and have experiences of a type of purgatory of darkness, the "cellar" of turning away from God which each man furnishes, quite literally, for himself. Pincher Martin does not repent and suffers the second death, the everlasting hell of nothingness. Sammy Mountjoy's ordeal, on the other hand, revives in him a healthy respect for the world of spirit. Up to this point, as Halde the psychologist has noted, Sammy has been rather mixed up; a natural inhabitant of the world of spirit, he has adopted the physical world in isolation, and so is stranded like a fish out of water, flopping about. Halde says,

"Intellectual ideas, even the idea of loyalty to your country, sit on you loosely. You wait in a dusty waiting-room on no particular line for no particular train. And between the poles of belief, I mean the belief in material things and the belief in a world made and supported by a supreme being, you oscillate jerkily from day to day, from hour to hour" (FF 110).

Locked in a totally dark broom closet, Mountjoy comes to accept both worlds for what they are, transcends each, and comes to an



understanding of the divine and pentecostal nature of all reality.

In the darkness, Mountjoy's vivid imagination soon invents out of "nothing" the "sum of all terror" (FF 132). The darkness itself becomes "full of shapes" and then the body of a lodger who died thirty years before (FF 22,134). Working his way around his prison inch by inch, he is reduced like Christopher Martin first to an animal crawling, squatting, crouching, inventing the angles of the walls and door, huddling into corners, hutching backwards and forwards along the wall. His quest into the nature of the "thing" at the centre of the closet is also the quest of what is at the centre of his own mind beyond and behind the veneer of rationality. "Be intelligent," Sammy scolds himself, much as Pincher had. "Leave the centre alone." But he cannot, because the shapes looming out of the centre, the darkness of his imagination, "swam before the face of primordial chaos" (FF 132). And because the creations of his imagination are more terrifyingly real than those of the material world, he is compelled to explore his physical space for reassurance of the absence of danger: "Let me find out before my mind invents anything worse, anything still unimaginable" (FF 135). Groping into the last few square inches of concrete he feels first water, which is linked to the urination of mad Minnie and mad Beatrice on the floor, and then an object, something smooth and damp.

My hand snatched itself back as though the  
snake had been coiled there, whipped back



without my volition, a hand highly trained  
by the tragedies of a million years (FF 136).

The damp object first feels like "an enormous dead slug," and then a "fragment of human flesh, collapsed in its own cold blood" (FF 138). Horrible as these objects may be, they are incapable of causing bodily harm, and Sammy as a rationalist should have accepted them calmly. But his irrational fear of the unknown overshadows his reason, and, experiencing dread, he screams for help. But it is a panic-stricken and despairing cry, a howling "against an absolute of helplessness," and still the physical world lets him down: "In the physical world there was neither help nor hope or weakness that might be attacked and overcome" (FF 140). Mountjoy's only escape is by bursting down, not the physical door of the cell, which has become unimportant, but the spiritual door that he had slammed on Moses and Jehovah when he made his decision to pursue the body of Beatrice: "The thing that screamed left all living behind and came to the entry where death is close as darkness against eyeballs. And burst that door" (FF 141). It is some time later that the commandant unlocks the physical door to the closet to let the physical Sammy out. But Sammy has already attained a new lease on life. He is "a man resurrected" — but not by the commandant. Kierkegaard's description of "Dread as a saving experience by means of faith" provides an interesting analogy to what has happened to Sammy here:





Dread is the possibility of freedom. Only this dread is by the aid of faith absolutely educative, consuming as it does all finite aims and discovering all their deceptions. And no Grand Inquisitor has in readiness such terrible tortures as has dread, and no spy knows how to attack the man he suspects, choosing the instant when he is weakest, nor knows how to lay traps where he will be caught and ensnared, as dread knows how, and no sharp-witted judge knows how to interrogate, to examine the accused, as dread does, which never lets him escape, neither by diversion nor by noise, neither at work nor at play, neither by day nor by night.

He who is educated by dread is educated by possibility, and only the man who is educated by possibility is educated in accordance with his infinity.<sup>19</sup>

Halde, Sammy's judge and Grand Inquisitor, cannot make Sammy talk.

But dread educates Sammy, and through experiencing dread he manages to grasp the "possibilities" of the world of spirit.

After his release, Sammy sees creation from a new, spiritual perspective:

Huge tears were dropping from my face into dust; and this dust was a universe of brilliant and fantastic crystals, that miracles instantly supported in their being . . . . The power of gravity, dimension and space, the movement of the earth and sun and unseen stars, these made what might be called music and I heard it . . . .

Standing between the understood huts, among jewels and music, I was visited by a flake of fire, miraculous and pentecostal; and fire transmuted me, once and forever (FF 141-142)<sup>20</sup>

Alive to a new and "vital morality", Sammy comes to realize what Sartrean man could never realize — the deep significance of "the relationship of individual man to individual man" (FF 143-144) — not of Self with Other-as-thing, but of Self with Other's self.



Sartre's system of psychology denied the possibility of a genuine "Thou" relationship to Other, even in love. But Martin Buber developed from Kierkegaard's concept of The Single One — the Self — the concept that in love (especially in "brotherly" love) man *could* bridge the gap between Self and Other, so that he *could* say "thou" to Other. And Buber's concept of God resides in this very capacity in the relationship between "I" and "Thou" — in the relationship between Man and Man.<sup>21</sup> It is essentially the same thing as Jocelin's view of God as "lying between people, and to be found there" — the theological position of both Golding and Martin Buber, that God is the "Thou" beyond the "thou", and quintessence of the relationship of "I" to "thou".

With his reconciliation with God, Sammy Mountjoy reaches the level of first grade thought. He attempts to portray that reconciliation in his art, concentrating on the Kings of Egypt, who appeared to transcend the physical world. But, like Jocelin in *The Spire* he realizes that this is only the first step; he also needs to receive forgiveness from Beatrice, and he wants to forgive Nick for seducing him to the barren world of science and Miss Pringle for scaring him away from his rightful world. But as he found out earlier when as a young boy the verger came to him seeking forgiveness for the swat on the ear, the innocent cannot forgive,<sup>22</sup> and Beatrice in her madness can only wet herself and worry about nothing. Nick on his deathbed faces a



personal struggle that Sammy cannot interrupt, and Miss Pringle is still smugly paying lipservice to her one world (*FF* 191). And so there is no opportunity to forgive and be forgiven, and Sammy finds that he must live with his guilt, "self-condemned." He has come to recognize that both the world of spirit and the world of matter are real, and they meet in him. Although there is no logical bridge, he himself is a bridge between the two worlds, and this is the message, the pattern, the "system" that Sammy feels compelled to communicate in his book. Only by such communication, by the writing of his "autobiography," can Sammy hope to reach other individuals so that they too might see. This process of communication is parallel to the need expressed by Golding for the novelist to convey important, universal themes that in themselves help man to understand himself. It is also parallel in an artistic sense to the creative process, when there is a fusion of both worlds out of which grows a masterpiece. This process is best exemplified in Golding's own masterpiece, which describes in detail the agony and sacrifice that follows inspiration, whether that inspiration is for a novel or for the construction of a spire of wood, stone and steel.



## CHAPTER SIX: THE SPIRE

### I

*The Spire* received the warmest reception from critics and reviewers of any of Golding's books, and many of the reviews pointed out Golding's continuing concern with a dualistic universe. "Throughout all Golding's work," wrote Elizabeth Stevens, "the strange forceful blend of the mystical and the physical has had a medieval power about it. So it feels as if he has simply come home in giving *The Spire* a medieval setting."<sup>1</sup> Walter Sullivan recognized that the two systems of reason and emotion "operate side by side and each generates its own necessity. . . . In Golding, God's and the angel's demand for a spire does not obviate the architectural realities of stress and strain."<sup>2</sup> Jeanne C. Miller compared Golding's "teleological suspension of the ethical" with existentialist writers such as Kierkegaard and, by implication, Martin Buber: "Surely one reason for Jocelin's difficulty in his extraordinary effort to establish an I-Thou relationship with God is that he has failed to see the necessity for establishing such a relationship with his fellow man."<sup>3</sup> Golding's affinity to existentialism was also explored by George H. Thomson, who compared Jocelin's "nominalist" beliefs with the thought of the 14th Century thinker William of Ockham.<sup>4</sup> D. Carmichael noted that the God that was left in ruins at the end of *The Spire* was man himself: "The whole knowable truth of moral experience might lie in this belief."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Michael Gallagher noted Jocelin's inability to conceive of a faith in which





other people had a place; his final salvation can come only when he has come to love people, for only in such love can God be found."<sup>6</sup> James R. Baker wrote that Jocelin's discovery of the cellar of his being "forces him to contemplate the relationship between the spirit and the flesh, between the head and the heart,"<sup>7</sup> and D. W. Crompton wrote that *The Spire* was "finally and at its profoundest level about a conflict between Faith and Reason."<sup>8</sup> Howard Babb discussed the "interrelationship of the divine and the secular" as the highest ideal for enlightened man,<sup>9</sup> and Leighton Hodson described the novel in terms of "the balance between body and soul."<sup>10</sup> Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor pointed to the novel as the culmination of Golding's literary career, his triumph, and the first of his novels to reveal the "mystery" of the Sphinx's riddle: "We might incline to regard Golding's achievement from *Lord of the Flies* to *The Spire* as a continual process, in that in his last novel he seems to have found a satisfying shape for myth."<sup>11</sup>

In the wake of such an array of positive commentary, it is perhaps redundant to call *The Spire* Golding's most polished, most controlled and most artistic work, the pinnacle of his oeuvre. Here we see some of the character types of Golding's earlier novels coming to fruition, but Golding has moved a long way from his essentially pessimistic position of *Lord of the Flies*. In Jocelin we see characteristics already to be discovered in the personalities of Jack and Father Watts-Watt, Pincher Martin and Sammy Mountjoy.



For Jocelin is a man obsessed, and Roger Mason is not far wrong when he calls him "the very devil." Yet for all the evil that Jocelin displays in his obsession and delusion of grandeur, the end product is an undoubted miracle: a work of art that still stands as a monument to the greatness of the conception and inspiration of the cathedral builders of the Gothic era. The shape of Golding's myth is the shape of creativity, of the creative process mirrored indeed in Golding's own novels. For in a sense the construction of the spire is in every way parallel to the writing of a masterpiece, indeed to the writing of *The Spire* itself from the initial inspiration to its final publication, when it is finally removed from the hands of the artist and becomes his monument.

In Jocelin's conception, the spire on top of the Cathedral Church of the Virgin Mary is to be a "prayer in stone" in praise of God the Father, whom Jocelin believes has chosen him through His holy spirit to oversee the construction (SP 120). He has absolute faith that "God will provide" (SP 8) and recognizes that "even in the old days he never asked men to do what was reasonable" (SP 121). But Jocelin does not realize that his conception of the Will of God is in fact no more than his own personal, subconscious will. In fact, Jocelin, through his pride, has placed himself in the position of God, smug in the assumption of omniscience: "I know them all, know what they are doing and will do, know what they have done. All these years I have gone on, put the place on me like a coat" (SP 8). We learn very quickly, through Golding's use of irony, that Jocelin



in fact knows virtually *nothing* about *anybody*, least of all himself. Even when the young deacons call Jocelin "proud" and "ignorant," Jocelin, in his pride and ignorance, is unable to comprehend that they refer to him. This sin of pride has been with him since his initial appointment as dean, and there is a sense of tragedy in the way that, as a young man overwhelmed by the burden of his newly-acquired office, he had attempted to stave off his pride, to overcome his weakness. He had written that he prayed "with what little strength I had that the pride of my position should be taken from me. I was young, and I took a monstrous pride in this great house of mine. I was all pride" (*SP* 191). He does not realize, on hearing what he had written, that his pride has lived with him and grown, right up to the time of building the spire. And this is why he cannot distinguish between his own will and God's. After all, is he not "father in God" of all connected with the church? "'You'll see how I shall thrust you upward by my will,'" he tells the reluctant Roger Mason. "'It's God's will in this business'" (*SP* 40).

Jocelin's assumption — his delusion — is that God chose him as Dean of the cathedral specifically to fulfil the mission of construction of the spire. Why else would a man so young and unlearned in theology attain such an awesome position in the church? He admits to the Visitor from Rome that he was "not a learned man" and consequently did not know the theological distinction between vision and revelation. The fact is that he is a rather homespun



cleric who has had to rely on his own devices to cope with the demands of his office rather than relying on the traditions of the church. His aunt sees him as "provincial," a term which he himself defines as "away from the centre of things, limited in vision and scope" (*SP* 181). The sad truth is that Jocelin is theologically illiterate. Father Adam realizes with astonishment, "'They taught you nothing? All those years ago? . . . They never taught you to pray!'" (*SP* 195). Father Adam feels obliged to treat Jocelin as a novice all over again, to teach him the very basic stages of prayer from the beginning. Father Anselm, Jocelin's former master, illuminates the matter of Jocelin's theological ignorance: "'But to see you skipping up through purely nominal steps, acolyte, deacon, priest; to see you dean of this church when you could hardly read Our Father. . .'" (*SP* 201). No wonder Jocelin is treated with contempt by all associated with the church! Anselm is perhaps justified in his castigation of Jocelin as a "minimal" priest who rose through the ranks like a rocket as long as the old king lived, but rose no further after his death (*SP* 202). He corroborates Jocelin's aunt's account of the practical joke she shared with the king in raising him to the deanship in the first place, as a reward for her performance in bed:

"He said: 'We shall drop a plum in his mouth.' Just like that. Casually. And then I said, 'He's a novice, I believe, in some mon-astery or other.' I started to giggle, and he started to roar with laughter and then we were hugging each other and rolling over and over — because you must admit, it was not without its funny side" (*SP* 184).







The sudden leap from novice to dean had left Jocelin totally unprepared for his responsibilities. His lack of a sound theological training causes him to be envied, indeed hated, by his subordinates — especially by Anselm, who eventually replaces Jocelin as dean.

"'You've lain on us like a blight,'" says Anselm.

"There have been times when the sight of you in your authority has squeezed this heart of mine small and made my breath come short. I'll tell you another thing. For all that stone contraption which hangs out there over our deliberations, there's a peace and amity in Chapter because you're not there, as if balm had been spilt" (*SP* 202).

The assumption of the divine, rather than monarchical, authority of Jocelin's investiture has led to a self-serving, denigrating pride that insists on unnecessary formality and on respect for his personal vision. Jocelin has replaced democracy in the Chapter with autocracy, apparently overcoming all opposition to the spire construction through blatant intimidation or humiliation of his opponents (*SP* 202).

And yet the vision that Jocelin saw, and on which he hung his hat, his life and ultimately the lives of others, has been blown out of all proportion over time through the workings of his memory. The idea of the spire was little more than a footnote in the initial vision that he claims to have had and which he recorded as a young man: "'Then, my heart moved; say that a feeling rose from my heart. It grew stronger, reached up until at the utmost tip it burst into a living fire. . .'" (*SP* 191). It had been only after the vision of a fountain of "flame and light" had left Jocelin that "the memory



of it, which I savoured as manna, shaped itself to the spire, fitted into a shape, the centre of the book, the crown, the ultimate prayer." Again we are reminded of the parallel process of creating a book, of the processes of inspiration and shaping that are entailed in writing that are similar to the initial vision and shaping of the spire, "the centre of the book." Father Adam reads from Jocelin's own book of inspiration, his journal:

"The spiritual is to the material, three times real! It was only when I was halfway to my house that I understood the true nature of my vision. As I turned to look once more, and bless, I saw there was something missing. The church was there; but the ultimate prayer, spiring upward from the centre — physically speaking, did not exist at all. And from that moment I knew why God had brought me here, his unworthy servant'" (SP 193-94).

To which Father Adam, in "astonishment and perturbation," can only expostulate, "'But was this all?'"

For Jocelin's obsession, ultimately so expensive in money and in lives, has been based on a very meagre dream, a vision not of a spire but of the observed *absence* of a spire — hardly a vision at all. His "vision" consisted of an uneasy feeling that the cathedral was in some way incomplete. Yet in the decades that have elapsed since the vision ("The ink must be brown, he thought. Anselm was still a young man, and Roger Mason no more than a boy" (SP 190)), Jocelin has built up the memory of it out of all proportion.

Jocelin spends more and more time working on the spire and less and less performing the proper "fire-tending" rites of his



holy office — just as Jack of *Lord of the Flies* forsakes the fire that to Ralph, Piggy and the littluns means salvation and, like Nimrod of old, becomes a hunter before the Lord. Jocelin, like the old Nimrod, builds a tower resembling that of Babel, using in the construction "murderers, cutthroats, sodomites, atheists or worse," men who use a language foreign to any church, men who are "more than merely wicked" (SP 169). Jocelin's mission is to reach heaven by means of concrete stone rather than by abstract prayer alone. It is the pagans, the worshipers of Balder, who construct the physical tower. They come "from every end of the world" (SP 32), and like the boys in *Lord of the Flies*, worship the devil around the blazes of Midsummer Night (SP 155). Jocelin is also linked to Nimrod (and to Jack) by the parallel situation that exists between him and the hunter Ivo, whose father buys him a position as canon in the church in exchange for wood for construction of the spire. After his ceremony of installation as canon (like Jocelin he cannot read but recites Our Father and Hail Mary), "Ivo went back to his hunting" (SP 72). Later, Anselm has occasion to rebuke Jocelin for such overt patronage, and links Jocelin's political appointment to that of Ivo:

"What about Ivo, Jocelin? A boy canon. Just because his father gave timber for the building. You see? He's got as much right in the church as you had. Or I have. Only he'll do less harm. He spends his time hunting" (SP 202).

In a way, Jocelin spends his time hunting, too — hunting for a way to fulfil what he sees to be his mission in life, for a way to pray,



for a route to God that he has never learned from theology because not properly grounded or versed in it. His quest is for direct communication with the heavens, with God; and at the end of the construction he can say, with anguish, that his spire pierced every stage of prayer, "from the bottom to the top" (SP 198). He has built out of an uninformed faith, out of an incomprehension of consequences, out of the type of "unconscious ignorance" that Golding has said is one of the hallmarks of grade-three thought. To apply the definitions of "Being" and "Becoming" supplied by Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor in connection with *Free Fall*, Jocelin is totally committed to a pattern of Being, in which "man chooses to be one thing or another, and this determines all his actions. . . . If you are that sort of being you do that sort of thing — and have no freedom to do otherwise."<sup>12</sup> This is the type of existence of which Sartre is so contemptuous, when the "*pour-soi*" attempts to view itself as an "*en-soi*," when an individual attempts to possess one's being as a "thing."

However hard we may try to dismiss Jocelin's responsibility for the consequences of building the spire, there comes a point when Jocelin's actions can no longer be regarded as the result of his "naiveté," "theological ignorance," or "sincerity," when they can no longer be regarded as "innocent." He virtually relinquishes his duties as dean for his personal project, and this in itself constitutes a usurpation of the Church bordering on heresy. Yet even this can be rationalized away in terms of the vision being "an overriding necessity" (SP 168). Jocelin's guilt, his loss of innocence, is







marked by a violation of natural law, of principles of ethics that must be weighed in terms of human relationships rather than strict theology, in accordance with most Roman Catholic catechisms. Were Jocelin to retrace his life, as did Sammy Mountjoy in *Free Fall*, with a view to finding the exact moment of loss of innocence, he might have located it at that crucial point in time when he decided to sacrifice the friendship of Anselm for the spire with the unspoken words, "Cost what you like" (SP 35). Jocelin's pride bubbles to the surface in this encounter. Anselm has obliquely implied that Jocelin is destroying the church with the spire construction. The pagan workers may defile the air with their dirty songs and dust, says Anselm, "'but they don't destroy the air. They don't destroy the building round it'" (SP 32-33). The decision confronting Jocelin is similar to that confronting Mountjoy before his decision to sacrifice "Everything" for Beatrice Ifor. Jocelin decides to sacrifice everything for the spire. "I didn't know how much you would cost up there, the four hundred feet of you," he says. "I thought you would cost no more than money. But still, cost what you like" (SP 35). Later he adds, "Let them fall and vanish, so the work goes on!" (SP 49).

The first to fall is Jocelin's daughter-in-God, Goody Pangall, whose innocence is sacrificed to Roger Mason with the callous rationalization, "She will keep him here" (SP 64). The first to vanish is her husband, Pangall, who is murdered and buried beneath the crossways in a pagan rite. Jocelin also has to take spiritual responsibility for the pregnancy, miscarriage and death of Goody, for the attempted



suicide and resulting blindness and dumbness of Roger Mason, and more generally for the disruption of the church and demoralization of his "flock."

As if to escape the burden of guilt he has to bear as the spire grows, Jocelin interprets the feeling of weight on his shoulders in terms of the rising erection of stone, wood and glass. Golding manages to mirror the personalities of his characters in the physical worlds to which they belong. As in the other novels, the process of gradual self-destruction and the reality of the protagonist's physical condition, for example, are conveyed by reference to external objects or agencies. In *The Inheritors*, we visualize Lok as he really is by seeing a drawing of him, sketched by Tuami, and in *Pincher Martin*, Christopher keeps us informed of his physical features (or at least the outline of his hair and whiskers) when he looks at himself in the mirrorlike surface of the water. In *The Spire*, we see Jocelin's physical features reflected in copper, and also through the craft of the dumb sculptor, who portrays a skinny madman with "wide blind eyes." As time goes by the caricatures of Jocelin, which ironically are to be built into the structure as gargoyles on the side of the cathedral spire, become more and more bizarre as Jocelin grows more and more demented.

Just as the world of the Neanderthals is different from the world of the new people, and the world of Piggy is different from that of Jack, so Jocelin's world is different from that of Pangall or Roger Mason. D. W. Crompton draws a parallel between Pangall's



kingdom and the kingdom of the Neanderthals: "Pangall's kingdom stands for . . . a stage of religious innocence pre-dating what might be called theological man."<sup>13</sup> Both kingdoms are overthrown by the encroachment of the "New." Pangall's kingdom seems to be a parody of the cathedral. Golding's description of the house is worth citing at some length:

Daily the shadow of that cottage lay on the south-east window — like a monument built against the architect's intentions. Now the substance of the cottage was close to his eye, another coming together of inside and out. The cottage hung in the angle of the yard against the cathedral wall, like the accretions under the eaves of an ancient house, where generations of swallows and sparrows have left their marks and the roots of nests. It was a building at once furtive, secret, and blatant; built without permission, tolerated, tacitly unmentioned, because the family that lived there was indispensable. It concealed one buttress and part of a window. Some of the wall was grey cathedral stone, and nearly as old as the stones of the cathedral itself. . . . A bit of the roof was lapped most expensively in lead; another bit in slates that bore an absolute likeness to the slates roofing the kitchen in the Vicar's Choral . . . . A dormer window had been shaped deliberately to take a rectangle of what looked like painted glass, no less; but the other window was smaller and filled with horn (*SP* 17-18).

Pangall's piecemeal kingdom has grown out of the construction of the cathedral, built of the very materials used for additions and repairs. The cottage is parasitic on the cathedral, hanging like a clump of mistletoe at the side of the church. If Jocelin conceives of himself, in his pride, as a microcosmic version of his cathedral with the phallic spire "springing, projecting, bursting, erupting from the heart of the building" (*SP* 8), so Pangall is described in a manner parallel to his house. The cottage, nestling in the shadow of the





cathedral, has an air of antiquity and fatigue: "The whole thing sagged like the thatch" (*SP* 18). Similarly, Pangall, standing under Jocelin's left shoulder, "crept close in Jocelin's shadow. His dusty thatch, his brown and dung-colour and dust was six inches below Jocelin's face, and leaning inward, close to the cassock" (*SP* 17, 20). Later, during a dream, "It seemed to Jocelin that he lay on his back in his bed; and then he was lying on his back in the marshes, crucified, and his arms were the transepts with Pangall's kingdom nestled by his left side" (*SP* 64). The buildings are extensions of the men that rule them.

Accordingly, as the cathedral is torn apart by the construction, Jocelin's soul also becomes torn — torn between the Christian and the pagan. Rejecting Pangall's offer of Christian labour in favour of pagan labour, Jocelin tacitly supports the invasion of the cathedral by pagans, in spite of a premonitory flash that the disrupted cathedral has become "some sort of pagan temple; and those men posed so centrally in the sundust with their crows . . . the priests of some outlandish rite" (*SP* 10). The bad language, the overt contempt of the workers for anything or anybody Christian (they ridicule Pangall, spit at Jocelin, revile the Nave) — all of these Jocelin comes to take for granted as the construction continues. He regards the men as instruments, as necessary tools for construction, and therefore their misconduct is to him irrelevant (*SP* 46, 55, 68). Deserted by his peers, who resent the intrusion of the workers into their place of worship, deserted by the Christian caretakers of the





church who cannot keep ahead of the dust, Jocelin has a dream in which "only Satan himself, rising out of the west, clad in nothing but blazing hair stood over his nave and worked at the building" (SP 65). He is plagued by other "vile and tempestuous visions" brought by the devil, and by "a whole train of memories and worries and associations" triggered by the mistletoe berry that he steps on beneath the crossways near Pangall's grave (SP 76-77, 95). After Goody Pangall's death, "Satan was given leave to torment him, seizing him by the loins, so that it became indeed an unruly member" (SP 138). Satan or his agent soon appears more often than Jocelin's angel, and prayer becomes an impossibility (SP 141).

And yet with all these "visions" and signals that might indicate spiritual ill-health within the church and a warped conception of the spire, Jocelin persists. His hypocrisy is ascendant when he defends his workers and persists in the spire construction. Eventually he places himself squarely with the pagan rather than Christian inhabitants of the church: "It's an overriding necessity that I should abandon everything else to stay with these men" (SP 141). The men do not discourage him, because he brings them luck (SP 151). But they treat him "jocularly, like a child," as if he were mad, and he comes to love them and respect them far more than he could love the Christian congregation, which he has not only ignored but has come virtually to despise. "They are all good men, he thought. They blaspheme and curse and work with their hands, but they are good men" (SP 153). He tells the interrogating Visitor, Jocelin's "judge,"



that the pagans rather than the Christians added glory to the house of God. He has come to ignore their wickedness because, in his hypocrisy and grade-three thought, he has become only nominally a Christian. His final gesture before the Visitor, out of his madness, is one of empathy for the workers and contempt for the Church, a gesture asserting that he is of the devil's party and knows it, that he is more a workman than a cleric: "He stood up, reached down his right hand, drew the hem of his gown through between his knees, twisted it, and tucked it up through his girdle" (*SP* 169). This is a total identification with the men who murdered Pangall, who had so dumb-founded Jocelin earlier in the novel with their pagan violence. Pangall's fear of death at the hands of the devil-worshipping workers had been fear of the unpredictable— and like Piggy's fear "of people" proves justified. Pangall's death as a sacrifice to bring luck to the superstitious workers is not unlike the ritualistic death of Simon, the impulsive murder of Piggy at the hands of Jack's henchman, Roger, and the projected fate of Ralph had not the naval officer appeared on the scene. Jocelin saw the torture of Pangall, in horror, but has so sacrificed his principles to the spire construction that he has forgotten the implications:

He saw men who tormented Pangall, having him at the broom's end. In an apocalyptic glimpse of seeing, he caught how a man danced forward to Pangall, the model of the spire projecting obscenely from between his legs — then the swirl and the noise and the animal bodies hurled Jocelin against stone, so that he could not see, but only heard how Pangall broke — He heard the long wolfhowl of the man's flight down the south aisle, heard the rising, the hunting noise of the pack that raced after him (*SP* 90).



If Jocelin can dismiss the wickedness of the men, he cannot so easily ignore what he conceives to be the wickedness in life of the dead Goody Pangall. For she is the subject of his devil-inspired dreams, and he reaches the conclusion that he has been "bewitched" by her (SP 156). As he tries to explain to the Visitor, "She died and then she came alive in my mind. She's there now. She haunts me. She wasn't alive before, not in that way" (SP 166). He admits that he must have known subconsciously about Pangall's impotence, and hypocritically arranged Goody's marriage to Pangall that her virginity may be retained for himself. This decision, he realizes, came from "down in the vaults, the cellarage of my mind." The symbolic consummation of a new marriage between the Virgin Goody and God Jocelin is described in terms of an orgasm of atonement:

She came towards him naked in her red hair.  
 She was smiling and humming from an empty mouth.  
 . . . He could not see the devil's face . . . ;  
 but he knew she was there, and moving towards him  
 totally as he was moving towards her. Then there  
 was a wave of ineffable good sweetness, wave after  
 wave, and an atonement (SP 178).

The stream of consciousness technique works effectively here — more effectively, perhaps, than in any of the other novels. Whereas in *Lord of the Flies* we caught only fleeting glimpses of the minds of Ralph and Simon, and in *Pincher Martin* we were prevented from seeing Pincher's soul because of his attempts to veil it with fact and physical detail of the external world, in *The Spire* we see a soul at first deceived and then as the facts of Jocelin's life impose themselves, experiencing agonies of remorse. There is nothing





clinical or analytical about the portrayal of Jocelin's feelings as in *Free Fall*. Thus when after Goody's death he thinks selfish thoughts, immediately he chides himself, and we are given direct insight into his personal anguish:

Then he would have a feverish thought.

"Now, if I told him to build a thousand feet high, he would do it. I've got what I wanted."

(No, no, no, no, no, no, hand pressing and relaxing, pressing and relaxing on the edge of a tomb.)

Once, his feet took him without his volition into Pangall's kingdom, where the door of her slumped cottage stood ajar. (God, God, God, pulling and twisting and tearing at the high stalks of weed.) So he hurried his feet back into the church, and went widdershins to the Lady Chapel. His mouth said the accustomed words but he saw, no, no, no, no, no, the white body and irretrievable blood. Then he thought of Anselm, but knew he could not explain these things profitably to that noble, empty head. (I must change my confessor, I must change my confessor, I must change my confessor.) But before he had done thinking that, he had forgotten what he said, because she was back again, with her tormented body and the terrible christening (SP 139-40).

Here is anguish and guilt and remorse, all right, emphasized by tormented repetition of the negative, and reflected in the action of the protagonist in his agonized and spasmic clutching first of the tomb and then of the weeds. Here too is ample reason for Jocelin's belief that Goody possesses his soul in a spell associated with witchcraft. His actions had led to her torment in life; now the memory of her torment causes him as much spiritual anguish again.

Goody becomes the theological scapegoat for Jocelin's guilt.

He appeals to Roger to tell him if Goody knew about or consented to the murder of her husband and his subsequent burial by pagan rite "with a sliver of mistletoe between his ribs." If so, says Jocelin,





"there could be no horror as deep — and of course a creature like that would haunt me!" (*SP* 212-13). This is unmitigated hypocrisy, for he at no time looks to himself as the cause of Goody's fall, as a man who virtually encouraged her into adultery. He cannot understand, prideful man that he remains, that even had Goody known about and consented to the murder of her husband (and there is no justification for this assumption), her sin in doing so would still be a mere fraction of Jocelin's own sin. Roger is fully aware of Goody's innocence, and, sickened by the implications of Jocelin's investigation, throws him bodily out into the street (*SP* 215).

Even on his deathbed Jocelin cannot come to terms with his hypocrisy and prejudice against Goody, cannot rise above his grade-three thought. He blames his separation from God on witchcraft, which "hides Him" (*SP* 220). Looking up to the direction of heaven, he can see only "a tangle of hair, blazing among the stars; and the great club of the spire lifted towards it" (*SP* 221). He sees Goody as Berenice, whose hair streams in the firmament like a constellation.

Jocelin's is a particularly insidious form of fanaticism, a bigotry that is self-righteous and destructive of others. Jocelin, like Golding's teacher Mr. Houghton, is quick to criticize others for sins of which he himself is guilty. "'Remember this is my house, under God,'" he tells Roger Mason proudly (*SP* 40), but then he says to Pangall, "'Didn't you say once that this is your house? There was sinful pride in that'" (*SP* 61). With one breath he prays to God to strengthen Goody and give her peace; with the next he treats her



as bait to keep the master builder working (SP 63-64). He is quick to receive gifts of money from his Aunt Alison, but treats her as one of the damned. He refuses to give Alison a burial plot within sight of the altar, and yet arranges for Ivo's illiterate son to be installed as canon (SP 72). He spurns the sexual banter of Rachel, and yet uses two married couples as pawns in his game, recognizing the likelihood of adultery. Despite rumours of plague in the city, Jocelin never joins the parishioners who throng to the church for condolence; rather he pushes them for contributions towards construction of the spire until "the people moaned and beat their breasts" (SP 66). He says he is going about his father's business, yet recognizes his own affinity with the business of the devil. "I looked for men of faith to be with me," he tells the Visitor, "and there was none." Yet Pangall and his men had volunteered and had been discouraged with the flat rebuke, "You couldn't do it" (SP 61). Jocelin's life has been fraught with inconsistencies, hypocrisy, contradiction, prejudice and deceit. And his dialogue is appropriately pious and sanctimonious. He always addresses members of his congregation almost condescendingly as "my son," and his religiosity of expression lends a specific dimension to Jocelin that makes him convincing to the reader:

"Is it your good wife? . . .

"We must be patient . . .

"They'll be a trial to us all . . ."

"Now think, my son . . ."

"Later, dear man, when I have prayed" (SP 19-21).



Like all grade-three thinkers, Jocelin is controlled more by feeling than by thought, and he is unconscious of his own ignorance. Try as the rationalists Pangall and Mason might, they are not thanked for their efforts at pointing out the contradictions in his beliefs. Only Alison can drive home forcefully the wedge that ultimately shatters his grade-three smugness — his uninformed, unthinking faith in the fact that he, Jocelin, was chosen.

## II

Of the three characters who exhibit traits of grade-two thought, Pangall falls most clearly within the type that Golding has experimented with in earlier novels. He is self-seeking, concerned with his physical well-being. He has a myopic view of the construction work, and like Piggy is more concerned with retaining traditional values than adjusting to the new. He is jeered at by the workers because of his physical deformity and because of his rumoured impotence. Just as Piggy is parasitic on the other boys, even eating at Jack's table in spite of his condemnation of the hunt, so Pangall is parasitic on the church. He and his father and his grandfather before him have relied on the church for a meagre income and a place to live.

Even though the church sustains him physically, Pangall is not a part of the Church. Except when he addresses Jocelin by his title "Reverend Father," he never utters a holy word. There is a lot of truth in Jocelin's accusation that Pangall hasn't any faith.





Certainly he would not experience such deeply felt shame "before people, before my own wife" had he learnt Christian humility.

Furthermore, he does not give Dean Jocelin anywhere near the respect that his position demands:

Pangall gripped the broom fiercely. He put his weight on both feet. His mouth twisted.

"Reverend Father, why did you do it?"

Resignedly Jocelin let his hands fall and clasped them before his waist.

"You know as well as I do, my son. So that this House will be even more glorious than before."

Pangall showed his teeth.

"By breaking the place down?"

"Now stop, before you say too much."

When Pangall answered, it was like an attack . . .

(SP 15).

The reasons for Pangall's concern are purely practical, although Jocelin does not understand what he is trying to say. Pangall's great-great-grandfather, who had helped build the cathedral, started the tradition, handed down from father to son, of patrolling the church roof to look for smouldering oak logs. Once he had found one smouldering, and had to adze out enough embers to make "a hole you could hide a child in." A fire that deep in the wood could only be caused by spontaneous combustion within the wood itself — combustion set off by a combination of hot sun and the fact that the oak beam had not been properly seasoned. Accordingly, the roof of the cathedral would not take "this breaking and digging up" (SP 15-16). Jocelin does not apply Pangall's information to his "stone ship" until after the caretaker's death when he first sees the mistletoe and wipes it off his shoe:



And as now so often seemed to happen, the berry and the twig could not be forgotten, but set off a whole train of memories and worries and associations which were altogether random. He found himself thinking of the ship that was built of timber so unseasoned, a twig in her hold put out one green leaf. He had an instant vision of the spire warping and branching and sprouting; and the terror of that had him on his feet. I must learn about wood, he thought, and see that every inch of it is seasoned (SP 95).

The image of the branching and sprouting spire is to return to him in nightmare form again and again in similar passages of stream of consciousness.

Pangall is an outsider, neither truly Christian nor truly pagan, and therefore is a perfect scapegoat for both Christians and pagans, and a target of mockery. But he does not like the role of fool, and tries to convince Jocelin to stand up for him. His concern is not for his wife, for the impotent caretaker cannot conceive that the men could pose any threat to her. Rather, his concern is strictly for himself:

"It's this, when you come down to it. Why me? Isn't there anyone else? Why must they make a fool of me?"

"We must be patient."

"All the time. Everything I do. They jeer and laugh" (SP 19).

His skepticism, rationalism and lack of faith lead him to doubt that he shall ever see the spire completed, and to the unspoken thought, guessed at by Jocelin: *"Because there are no foundations, . . . Jocelin's Folly will fall before they fix the cross on the top"* (SP 20).



Roger Mason's attitude towards the construction of the spire differs very little from Pangall's. He too refuses to believe in miracles and is reluctant to construct the spire without positive evidence of foundations strong enough to support it. The existing foundations are "'just about enough for a building of this weight'" without the spire, Roger calculates. By scientific analysis, he ascertains that the church was built on "'a raft of brushwood'" not stable enough to bear any more weight. Jocelin merely laughs at his calculations and skepticism. "'Your craft can find nothing certain, my son,'" he says in a speech which carries strange overtones of Halde's to Sammy. "'You say they built a raft. Why not believe the building floats on it? It's simpler to believe in a miracle'" (SP 38). He criticizes Roger for his selfish, materialistic attitude in taking on the responsibility of building the spire to keep his army of builders together until more promising work appears, "'because without the army you're nothing'" (SP 39). Mason's point of view differs totally from Jocelin's. He asks the dean to see the pillars "'the way I see them myself'": "'They support nothing but the roof; and they were never intended to bear much more than their own weight'" (SP 41). Again, to apply the terminology of Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, Roger is committed to a pattern of Becoming, "where cause and effect operate, man chooses, and becomes what he chooses by acting."<sup>14</sup> The feat of building the spire is to Roger patently impossible, within the laws of cause and effect. Devoid of faith in Jocelin's God, Roger tries



again and again to escape from his binding contract, the initial net with which he is tied to the cathedral. He becomes Jocelin's "instrument," a tool which Jocelin must use to have his dream fulfilled.

Jocelin sees Goody and Roger together, attracted by musk and their knowledge that their mates are both impotent (Pangall because of his deformity and Rachel because whenever she tries to make love she laughs compulsively), and sees how Goody can be used to entrap Roger even more. When the earth begins to creep and the pillars sing, indicating fundamental weaknesses in the foundations, Roger realizes that if he is not released from the contract at once, he is doomed to make the decision that will bind him forever to Goody through adultery. "'Faith or no faith, Father, we've come to the end,'" he says, admitting that he has hopes of going to Malmesbury where a safe construction project awaits. But Jocelin has already informed Malmesbury that Roger's services are still needed at the cathedral, and he insists that Roger stay. "'You just don't know what'll come out of our going on!'" Roger cries in a modern vernacular that surprises the reader and contrasts sharply with Jocelin's sedate language.<sup>15</sup> He alludes here both to the unrest of his construction workers and his passion for Goody, and as if in answer to this warning, a riot ensues during which Jocelin sees Roger with "arms spread from his side in anguish and appeal, in acknowledgement of consent and defeat" (*SP* 90). Still Roger forces himself on against his better judgement, relying solely on guesswork — a violation of the codes of his profession. "'When you come down to it, I know





nothing," he says.

"I tell you, we guess. We judge that this or that is strong enough; but we can never tell until the full strain comes on it whether we were right or wrong . . . .

"We're surrounded by new things. We guess; and go on building" (*SP* 116).

The spire, Roger says, is a "'sheer impossibility'" (*SP* 118).

In despair, Roger resorts to drink and, like Martin and Mountjoy, develops an irrational fear — of heights. Jocelin notices that his fear "was not a rational one, like the fear of a healthy animal. It was a poisoned fear" (*SP* 144). He abandons the spire and becomes a broken man, his reputation ruined by the "stone hammer."

Both Pangall and Mason share their cynicism for the success of Jocelin's project; neither has faith. Both have withdrawn from the world of spirit into the unidimensional world of physical things. And even though we are not exposed enough to their thoughts to be able to make completely accurate assessments of the quality of their thought, both Pangall and Mason resemble grade-two thinkers that Golding has used elsewhere. Pangall physically resembles Piggy and Phanocles of earlier novels; in his dilemma with Goody, Roger Mason resembles Christopher Martin and Sammy Mountjoy. By association, as well as by glimpses of ideas and attitudes, they fall within Golding's category of grade-two thinkers.

Jocelin's Aunt Alison, the catalyst who helps Jocelin overcome the shame of his humanity with the revelation that his own lofty appointment was solidly grounded in the world of sex and sin, offers Jocelin the opportunity to face life squarely from a



realistic point of view that takes into account the physical as well as the spiritual elements of existence. Like Halde with Sammy Mountjoy, she detects the contradictions in Jocelin's approach to life and she destroys Jocelin's faith, at least temporarily, without offering an alternative. But at least she opens the door to Jocelin to come to grips with the world from her point of view. Cynical of religion, skeptical of the motives of any cleric, including Bishop Walter who supplies the Holy Nail for the spire, she lives in an almost totally physical world in which everything has a logical explanation. As with Pangall and Mason, we do not get a total picture of her thought, but the glimpses we receive convince us that she obeys the standards of grade-two thought, with all its cynicism.

The dialogue of the grade-two thinkers contrasts strongly with that of Jocelin. Pangall's is coarse, blunt and undiplomatic. Roger, on the other hand, appears diplomatically to weigh every sentence as if every conversation with Jocelin were a battle of wits, of bluff and counterbluff: "'There comes a point when vision's no more than a child's playing let's pretend . . . . Reverend Father. I — admire you. But the solid earth argues against us'" (SP 85). Again the colloquial modern English obtrudes; Golding's attempt to convey Roger as a man living long before his time does not appear compatible with the setting in which he is placed. Parallel situations can be seen in Golding's portrayal of the modernistic Liar in the prehistoric Egypt of "The Scorpion God,"



and in Palm of "Clonk Clonk." Again, Aunt Alison's dialogue is colloquial and conversational in style, as when she recounts the process by which she "chose" Jocelin (SP 184). The speech is very similar in style and use of colloquial turns of phrase to Golding's own conversational speech as recorded in Biles' *Talk: Conversations with Golding*. In each case the mannerisms, as well as the dialogue, suit the character. Hence we see Rachel revolving around Roger, continuously nattering. We see Anselm sulking, moody and silent, in the dusty nave. We see Pangall leaning on his broomstick and the workmen with their hods and crowbars amidst the dust. Each of these descriptions provides a separate picture, just as Golding provided separate pictures of Ralph and Piggy at the beginning of *Lord of the Flies*.

### III

To view the world from Alison's point of view is also to view the world from the point of view of Pangall and Roger Mason. Roger had asked Jocelin to examine the pillars: "'See them the way I see them myself'" (SP 41). Pangall similarly invited Jocelin up onto the roof to see the beams for what they were. But Jocelin, at the time, could not see. As the dumb sculptor had depicted him, he had "wide, blind eyes" that saw nothing but the memory of his vision (SP 24). Forced to see the world from a more rational viewpoint, he can only feel guilty and self-condemned. "'The things I've done,'" he says hoarsely to his aunt, and later, "I traded a





stone hammer for four people." It is at this point, when Jocelin is experiencing personal remorse, that the sculptor shows the shattered Jocelin once again the pillars that bear the weight of the spire, and this time he sees them from a new and rational perspective. He had seen them as "immense" in spite of Roger's insistence that they were too thin for their length and supported nothing but the roof. Roger had pointed to the horizontal seams, implying that the original builders had been irresponsible in stacking up rocks one on top of the other like checkers to make the pillar (*SP* 41). But the sculptor reveals that even Roger's guesswork gave the early workmen too much credit. For the pillars are not even made of solid stone:

He took the chisel with its burred-over head out of the hole, lifted up an iron probe and thrust it in. It sank in, in, through the stone skin, grated and pierced in among the rubble with which the giants who had been on the earth in those days had filled the heart of the pillar.

Then all things came together. His spirit threw itself down an interior gulf, down, throw away, offer, destroy utterly, build me in with the rest of them; and as he did this he threw his physical body down too, knees, face, chest, smashing on the stone.

Then his angel put away the two wings from the cloven hoof and struck him from arse to the head with a whitehot flail (*SP* 188).

Here, the spiritual and physical worlds and the patterns of Being and Becoming crash head on, leaving Jocelin virtually demolished in body and in soul. But it is right after this experience that Jocelin tries once again to think of God, this time through the human sacrifices he has made:



I have given it my back.

Him.

Her.

Thou (*SP* 189).

Yet still he cannot find a balm for his guilt. Like Mountjoy, he realizes the necessity of receiving forgiveness from the people he has ignored and hurt. First he goes to Roger:

"I'm a fool. Also I think — I'm a building with a vast cellarage where the rats live; and there's some kind of blight on my hands. I injure everyone I touch, particularly those I love. Now I've come in pain and shame, to ask you to forgive me" (*SP* 211).

But the fact remains that the innocent cannot forgive. As Sartre would say, "Evil cannot be redeemed."

Jocelin has reformed since his prideful speeches of the first chapter. Although Roger is inclined to forgive him with tears and the offer of shared wine, when Jocelin presses the master builder for information about Goody, he is thrown out into the street and stripped by a hostile crowd. Yet Jocelin's trip to see Roger was not only one of penance and physical pain, for the romantic part of Jocelin has seen another miracle — the glory of an appletree in full bloom and the flash of a kingfisher swooping across the river:

There was a cloud of angels flashing in the sunlight, they were pink and gold and white; and they were uttering the sweet scent for joy of the light and the air. They brought with them a scatter of clear leaves, and among the leaves a long, black springing thing. His head swam with the angels, and suddenly he understood there was more to the appletree than one branch. It was



there beyond the wall, bursting up with cloud and scatter, laying hold of the earth and air, a fountain, a marvel, an appletree; and this made him weep in a childish way so that he could not tell whether he was glad or sorry. Then, where the yard of the deanery came to the river and trees lay over the sliding water, he saw all the blue of the sky condensed to a winged sapphire, that flashed once (SP 204-05).

It is only on his deathbed, however, as Jocelin thinks with clear thought, trying desperately to find an answer that fits over both the physical and spiritual worlds, that he experiences an apocalyptic vision that makes all of his sacrifices worthwhile. First he thinks of how he would have viewed God had he known what he now knows:

"God, thought Jocelin, as his mind saw things small, God? If I could go back, I would take God as lying between people and to be found there" (SP 220).<sup>16</sup> But the irrational world of Goody-Berenice hides God from Jocelin; he has not yet dismissed that prejudice from his mind. He can only turn the rational part of his mind to the bleak mortality of man the mayfly:

He saw all people naked, creatures of light brown parchment, which bound in their pipes or struts. He saw them pace or prance in sheets of woven stuff, with the skins of dead animals under their feet and he began to struggle and gasp to leave this vision behind him in words that never reached the air:

*How proud their hope of hell is. There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be (SP 222).*

His vision of Goody-Berenice reflects the world of spirit alone; his vision of mankind reflects the world of matter in which God is lost and hardly figures at all. Then in the final seconds of his life, he suddenly forgives Goody and forgets the fiction of



her "witchcraft," taking the full responsibility on his own shoulders: "And what is heaven to me unless I go in holding him by one hand and her by the other?" (SP 222). Through the perceptiveness and consideration of Father Adam, who sits him up so that he can see the spire through his window, Jocelin glimpses his life's work from a balanced and universal perspective which accounts for both worlds: the spire would not exist without his imagination and determination, but equally it would not exist without Roger's practical skills. Both the world of spirit and the world of matter blend there in the artistic miracle of the spire. Jocelin's death, markedly contrasting that of Pincher Martin, is to a heaven of realization of the deep significance of creation, of mingled terror and joy and astonishment and substance "that broke all the way to infinity in cascades of exultation that nothing could trammel" (SP 223). His final vision, for which Golding has prepared us with the allusions to the garden and to the alternative ways of viewing man's metaphysical situation, is at once of God and of Heaven, and a newfound burst of optimism springs from the revelation of the accidental blending of spirit and matter in his own creation. Here Golding goes beyond the philosophy of Sartre and the theology of Buber (that God exists in the I - Thou relationship, the Divine "We,") and takes a theological position similar to that of Paul Tillich:

God is within beings as their power of being, as an analytic dimension in the structure of reality. As such he is the "substance" appearing in every rational structure; the "ground" creative in every rational creation; the "abyss" unable to be exhausted





by any creation or totality of creation; the "infinite potentiality of being and meaning" pouring himself into the rational structures of mind and reality to actualize and transform them. God is, then, the ground not only of truth but of being as well. In fact, he can be the ground of <sup>1</sup>truth precisely because he is the ground of being.

It is precisely in Tillich's terms that Jocelin manages to attain oneness with God. For he realizes that in its complexity the spire has become something more than man-made -- something at once substantial, magical and incomprehensible, a miracle of God's creation, "*Like the appletree!*"



## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PYRAMID

### I

Most initial criticism of *The Pyramid* was condemnatory. The novel was regarded as a weak attempt at social satire, trite and cliché-ridden, bland and shallow. John Wain, for example, wrote in *The Observer*, "In *The Pyramid*, the worst has happened. We have Golding as a social chronicler, writing about everyday life with no overtones."<sup>1</sup> He accused Golding of drawing humanity "simply as a collection of social beings," without "the metaphysical impulse" that was present in his earlier works. Another critic called it "an embarrassment, a disaster."<sup>2</sup> Others thought it disorganized. Even Golding's long-standing supporters were baffled, and Bernard F. Dick, who had published a book on Golding in the Twayne English Authors Series just before *The Pyramid* was released, rationalized what he perceived to be its disunity and lack of "mosaic exactness" by noting that "the novel began as two stories with a common narrator."<sup>3</sup>

These initial criticisms were countered by critics who had contemplated, obviously at some depth, what Golding was trying to do in the novel. As early as 1968, Avril Henry shattered any illusions that *The Pyramid* was a simple novel by noting literally hundreds of significant symbols, images and allusions interwoven through it, all associated with the geometrical and social implications



of "pyramid."<sup>4</sup> Some of her research was subsequently mirrored by Marshall Walker, who noted that "the novel . . . is a three-sided pyramidal structure, each section dramatizing a failure — or failures — to respond to the injunction of the epigraph."<sup>5</sup> The epigraph is a quotation from Ptah-hotep, an Egyptian king who himself was buried in a pyramid: "If thou be among people make for thyself love, the beginning and end of the heart."

The pyramid of the title is not only the social pyramid — the "crystal pyramid" to which the inhabitants of Stilbourne vibrate in time (PY 178). Besides class stratification from the densely-populated "riff-raff" of the lower class to the scantily-populated upper class, "pyramid" implies stratification in terms of wealth, education, and status symbols such as cars. It also implies, in its Egyptian sense, monument and memorial, religion and state. Indeed, the reference to the number three or multiples of three has broad symbolic connotations throughout the novel. The main characters in the first episode are three teenagers: Evie Babbacombe of the lower class, Oliver of the middle class, and Bobby Ewan of the upper class. All three children are automatically labelled by social prejudice according to the positions retained in society by their parents: Evie is the daughter of the lowly Town Crier, Oliver is the son of the town chemist, and Bobby Ewan's father is the prestigious town doctor. Their social difference matches their physical age and height: Evie is three months younger and about three inches shorter than Oliver, while Bobby is three months older and three inches





taller (PY 14, 19). Significantly, each of the three is an only child in a family of three.

Evie's membership in the lower class causes Oliver and his parents to spurn her, in spite of the fact that she works in the office next door. "I had seen Evie often enough and for years . . . . But of course we had never spoken. Never met. Obviously" (PY 13). The distance between Oliver and Bobby Ewan is just as great. Oliver's mother keeps "regretting the social difference between the Ewans and ourselves," and Oliver recalls a childhood conversation held between the boys which accentuated their social difference:

We had hardly been out of our respective prams.  
 "You're my slave."  
 "No I'm not."  
 "Yes you are. My father's a doctor and yours  
 is only his dispenser."  
 That was why I pushed him off the wall into  
 the Ewans's cucumber frame, where he made a very  
 satisfactory crash. Not surprisingly we drifted  
 apart after that . . . (PY 23).

Just as Oliver learns his social position from his parents, so Robert learns his "off-campus" from the elder Ewans and "on-campus" from the high-class school he attends. His superior airs are typical of the traditional British upper class engendered by the existence of an aristocracy. When Oliver insults Robert, the doctor's son automatically assumes a snobbish attitude and give Oliver a "Look":

It was the sort of Look that kept the Empire together, or quelled it at least. Armed with that Look and perhaps a riding crop, white men could keep order easily among the clubs and spears. He walked with great dignity into the house, duke's profile high, attention straight ahead (PY 23).



In this caricature of an upper-class youth who is at the same time a grade-three thinker, one is reminded of Golding's contempt for the product of such "superior" schools as Eton. Golding has written that he would cite Eton as an example of "the contradictions in the English character —

our indestructibility, our unconscious hypocrisy,  
our sheeplike conformity in admiration of individualism,  
our lipservice to fair play and our indifference to social  
injustice, our ability to change perceptually and remain  
always the same . . . .

. . . People send their sons to Eton for the snob-  
value . . . . Children are sent to Eton not merely  
because it gives them a social advantage, but because  
it gives their parents a social advantage. A son at  
Eton, like a page at court, is a status symbol . . . .  
Eton is nothing but a channel for social privilege;  
and in a nation of social snobs, social privilege is a  
real privilege . . . . If he is a normal, healthy boy  
he will delight in the effortless motion with which he  
floats towards the top of the social pyramid.<sup>6</sup>

Thinking of all the Etonians that he has known, Golding recalled that they did everything "with an innocent air of superiority."

And referring to English public schools in general, and to Eton in particular, Golding wrote: "All but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are":

There does exist one person who could contemplate  
the destruction of Eton without absolute dismay.  
And if a Royal Commission should ever find its conclusions  
in line with mine, they can provide me with a mile or two  
of wire, a few hundred tons of TNT and one of those  
plunger-detonating machines which make the user feel like  
Jehovah.

Both Bobby Ewan and Oliver realize that however much they might be able to use Evie to satiate their own physical desires, they could not be seen with her socially. Oliver doesn't have to ask why



the "sophisticated" Bobby "borrows" Bounce's car instead of his father's to go on a date with Evie: "I understood that the son of Dr. Ewan couldn't take the daughter of Sergeant Babbacombe to a dance in his father's car. Didn't have to think. Understood as by nature" (PY 18). Social convention also prevents Oliver from an open meeting with Evie; he is too ashamed of her to walk down the street at her side. Thus, "with a proper sense of taboo I followed her at a distance of fifty yards" (PY 44). Once out of sight of the town, however, Oliver is all too anxious to get close to Evie, and wrestles with her on the pier, trying to seduce her (PY 49). And then, on the way home, he again remembers Social Distance, lags, makes a lame excuse about going for a walk, and returns home via the back alley (PY 50, 64). After these hypocritical precautions, Oliver is horrified when Evie's mother bows and smiles to him on the street. Golding's satire is biting when he describes Mrs. Babbacombe's greetings: "No one could tell whether Mrs. Babbacombe was mad, and believed herself entitled to make them, or whether she came from some fabulous country where the Town Crier's wife and the wife of the Chief Constable might be on terms of intimacy" (PY 43-44). Whatever the reason for her behaviour, Oliver bitterly laments what he perceives to be Evie's indiscretion in having told her parents about him (PY 62).

Oliver's hypocrisy is accentuated by his attitude after Bobby Ewan's motorcycle accident. Secretly, he is glad that his prime competitor for Evie's body is hurt, and, like Pincher Martin, hopes to profit from the mishap. His "new craving" and "new wickedness"



lead him to go to the slum area of the town to get the "thing" he wants. Then, having "possessed" that "thing" he worries about Evie getting pregnant, which would mean "goodbye to Oxford" (PY 81). But the social implications are even more horrific to him:

My father, so kind, slow and solid, my mother, tart, yet with such care of me, such pride in me — It would kill them. To be related even if only by marriage, to *Sergeant Babbacombe*! I saw their social world, so delicately poised and carefully maintained, so fiercely defended, crash into the gutter. I should drag them down and down through those minute degrees where it was impossible to rise but always easy to fall — Yes. I should kill them (PY 82).

He does not show concern for Evie, who is already in that position. His whole concern is for himself. Evie is "life's necessary, unspeakable object," "the accessible thing" (PY 89, 91). Even after two years at Oxford, Oliver retains his ingrained social prejudice and feels uncomfortable when he meets Evie in the street.

Oliver is typical of the residents of Stilbourne. Since early childhood, he has been learning social prejudice from his mother, absorbing it through his pores, through the process of "off-campus history." Oliver's mother is described as a spy equipped with "antennae" and an ability to stand unflinching behind the one-way mirror of her muslin curtains, "watching to find what a new hat, a meeting, a gesture, an expression even, could reveal" (PY 177). Oliver describes himself as "a kind of interplanetary probe," unconsciously gathering information that his mother could interpret by applying her own observations. His mother reaches the heights of hypocrisy when Henry brings his "unforeseen wife and child" to Stilbourne. First







she laughs, and then says she pities Bounce (PY 185). Her subsequent criticism of Bounce and Henry escalates when they succeed in coming to some sort of compromise, and Henry, his wife and his child move in with Bounce (PY 191). "'He'll have her last penny,'" Oliver's mother laments; yet later, when Henry moves back out of Bounce's house, she is equally critical: "'I knew they would, one day when she was no more use to him . . . . I never trusted the man. Never.'" Years later, when Henry has made a success of himself and Bounce has "got her money back ten times over," Oliver's mother retains her grade-three prejudice against Henry, but now for a different reason: "'By the time he's done, he'll have bought up half the town'" (PY 198, 203).

The third-grade thought of Oliver's mother is equally clearly portrayed in the frequent cat-fights between her and Norman Claymore in the Stilbourne Operatic Society's production of *King of Hearts*. The S. O. S. itself is operated almost exclusively by middle-class grade-three thinkers, and Oliver's mother is in charge of the music. Naturally, the size of the production is limited, but not just by space or monetary considerations:

Even if we had a mass of talent and a vast stage, orchestra pit and auditorium, there would still have been an overriding limitation, the social one. No one of the college's closed society was available; and Sergeant Major O'Donovan helped us only because he was right on the fringe of it. Then again, at least half of Stilbourne's population was ineligible, since it lived in places like Chandler's Close and Miller's Lane, and was ragged. Though Evie sang and was maddeningly attractive, she would never have been invited to appear, not even as a member of the chorus. Art is a meeting point; but you can go too far (PY 114).



The petty envy felt between Oliver's mother and Norman Claymore is expressed by her in a one-sided way which reveals her unconscious ignorance and pettiness. She tells Oliver that Evelyn DeTracy, the producer, "'knows the only way to handle that man — any of that family indeed — is flattery. Did you notice how he laid it on?'" (PY 138). The fact that Evelyn flatters her just as much entirely escapes her.

Like Sammy Mountjoy of *Free Fall*, Oliver is torn between two worlds, the irrational world of spirit and imagination, represented by his idealistic love for Imogen; and the physical world represented by his lust for Evie. But his personality is divided even more sharply between his conflicting interests — his love for music as a mode of the spiritual world, and his love for science as an expression of the physical world. The world represented by music contains Imogen, but it also contains Cecilia Dawlish, Oliver's music teacher. The world represented by science contains Olly's father, and it offers Oxford, and a profitable future. The dilemma lasts only until the physical advantages on the side of "science" outweigh completely those of the arts. Sammy Mountjoy rejected the world of spirit because it contained Rowena Pringle, who was a bitch. Similarly, Oliver rejects the world of music because he associates it with Miss Dawlish, whom he hates.

For "Bounce" is the daughter of a "failed musician," who was overly strict and prejudiced in his musical tastes, and she has inherited her father's nature, prejudices and attitudes. Her father



had considered gramophones and radio a travesty of his profession and once attacked a man who operated a gramophone, smashing the record with his stick. Oliver remembers him as "a thwarted man, violently acting out his prejudices and the drama of his fruitless ambitions" (PY 165). Through the processes of off-campus history and an Electra complex comparable to that of Evie, Bounce has absorbed her father's attitudes and opinions and held to them as truth, keeping a picture of her stern father on the wall to remind her of the "ideal." She has learned from her knuckle-rapping father the dubious values of asceticism for asceticism's sake. But because she is committed by her inherited prejudice to a world of music without gramophones or radio, her very field of specialty is limited: her students hear more music than she, and therefore are better qualified to judge what music is good and what bad (PY 188). Standing at Bounce's graveside, in front of the marble stone which announces her father's favourite slogan, "Heaven is music," Oliver feels a deep revulsion for a woman who in life abused the sacred ground of music by teaching it academically with a hovering yardstick and ticking metronome rather than teaching the genuine, unstructured music of the heart. Oliver's revulsion resembles that of Mountjoy when he was locked in the broom closet. He sees for a nauseating instant the world in which Bounce still seemed to exist, buried alive as if in a pyramid of her own:

I felt in every nerve that my shudders came out of the ground itself. For it was here, close and real, two yards away as ever, that pathetic,





horrible, unused body, with the stained frills and Chinese face. This was a kind of psychic ear-test before which nothing survived but revulsion and horror, childishness and atavism, as if unnameable things were rising round me and blackening the sun. I heard my own voice — as if it could make its own bid for honesty — crying aloud.

"I never liked you! Never!" (PY 213).

This, from the mouth of a man who as a boy, like every self-respecting middle-class boy in Stilbourne, was (in his mother's opinion) "devoted" to Miss Dawlish. Later, he has a chance to analyse his feelings:

*"I was afraid of you, and so I hated you. It is as simple as that.*

*When I heard you were dead I was glad"* (PY 214). Bounce, like Miss

Pringle, had ruled by fear rather than love. Thus she abused the

medium of the spirit of music to which she had access, and ruined

the experience of music for Oliver, who instead pursued a career in

chemistry, manufacturing poisonous gas. Oliver could not communicate

with her on a human level because she had bound herself up in the

tradition of pseudo-music that her father had started. Eventually

both Bounce and Oliver are stranded on the islands of their respective

philosophies, Bounce in her irrational world and Oliver in his

rationalistic world of chemistry and mathematics.

## II

If Oliver acquired his ingrained social prejudices from his mother, his father has been equally influential, and just as Sammy Mountjoy turns away from Miss Pringle's world to that of Nick Shales, so Oliver turns away from the irrational world of his mother and Bounce Dawlish to accept the world of his father. A





rationalist to the hilt, Oliver's father, like Piggy and Nick, is always peering through lenses, trying to keep tabs on the physical world. He wears pebble glasses, and looks down a microscope most of his working day. Forced to play in the S. O. S. production, he plays not music, but notes, as Evelyn De Tracy points out, "'with a sort of smouldering dexterity. . . . I've never seen a clearer projection of furious contempt. Not a word said. Eyes on his music. Every note in place'" (PY 146-47). There is no question that music plays second fiddle to chemistry in the life of Oliver's father, and he resembles Golding's own father when he warns Oliver to follow his own example and pursue science rather than music for a career:

"Look — Father. Didn't you learn the violin?"  
 "I never let it come between me and the *Materia*  
*Medica* — Oliver, don't you really want to go to  
 Oxford?" (PY 197).

Golding recalled of his own father, who tried to persuade him to study Latin so that he could go to university: "What I remember most of that terrible evening is the reasonableness of my father's arguments. If I really did not want to go to Oxford, that was all right . . ." (HG 174). As in *Pincher Martin* and *Free Fall*, autobiographical overtones seem to have been subtly infused into the mainstream of the novel.

Oliver's father is so caught up in the rational world of logic and chemistry that he cannot distinguish between the limits of scientific analysis and common decency. When Evie tells him about her relationship with Olly, he does not believe her, but insists that she demonstrate her allegations with empirical evidence. She agrees



to submit to Oliver's sexual whims in plain view of Oliver's father. The scientist in him leads him to watch his son virtually breeding Evie, who recalcitrantly submits. He views the incident through his binoculars from a distance of six hundred yards, and when Oliver visits him shortly afterwards the binoculars are still out on the table. Oliver waits for an explanation:

"I had to know, you see — had to. After what she — " He put the bottle down, glanced at the window, then at his hands; passed one of them over his bald head.

"Laughing and laughing. Hysteria, I thought. Laughing and laughing and — or sneering."

But the initial excuse he gives for his distaste of what he has witnessed is not moral but prudential, rationalistic:

"Young men don't — think. I — You don't know about that place, Chandler's — Yes. Well. There's — disease, you see. One's not suggesting that one's necessarily — been exposed to infection — but if one goes on like this — "

His rationalism fails him. Concern for disease alone is an inadequate reason for his spying on Oliver. Like Nick Shales, he must refer to his separate, conditioned, moral code, the last vestiges of Nineteenth Century morality:

He took off his glasses and cleaned them with surgical care; and suddenly, for all his professed but indifferent agnosticism the voice of generations of chapel burst out of him.

" — this man what d'you me call him — these books — cinema — papers — this sex — it's *wrong*, *wrong*, *wrong*!" (PY 100).

Oliver is inclined to agree with his father, and is astounded that Evie can retain her innocent composure:



My mouth opened slowly. This known, this detected, this fallen woman, had not changed in any way at all. Lips everted, mysterious smile, pert nose, glossy bob, knees motionless, she slid along, and as ever, bore the almost palpable aura of sex in the air round her (PY 101).

Oliver is wrong to assume that Evie has fallen. He is the one who has fallen. He is guilty because he, like Sammy, deliberately cut across the grain of his personal values — the social and moral values of middle-class Stilbourne. Evie had no such values to traverse. As Golding has said, "Sexual sin is exploitation of one person by another . . . . When exploitation enters into sex, it becomes sinful. . . . It's the exploitation, not the sex" (TC 111 - 112). Oliver had exploited Evie, and Evie had taken steps to stop his exploitation. He feels guilt, especially after he is discovered by the father he loves. But Evie is innocent. It must be remembered that Evie is motivated to tell Oliver's father about their relationship only after Oliver appeared determined to blackmail her into having intercourse. After all, had he not seen the welts on her bottom? Oliver had assumed that the welts were the marks of Captain Wilmot's whip, but we soon learn that they were the tracks of a flagellation session with her own father. Evie does not realize that Olly thinks she was whipped by Wilmot: all that haunts her is the fear that the people of Stilbourne will learn that her father whips her in such a way:

"Olly — "  
 "Yeah?"  
 "You won't — "  
 "Won't what?"





She sagged on her arms, looking down at the earth. She glanced up again, biting her lower lip so that a tiny stain of crimson appeared on each incisor.

"I'll do anything. Anything you want."

My heart gave a heavy leap and my flesh stirred. . . . I stared curiously at my slave (PY 91).

His first demand is that she sleep with him then and there, a demand modified to the next day. Oliver here resembles a Sartrean existential man, for whom sexual love is "a perpetual tension" between sadism and masochism:<sup>8</sup> we have seen the same thing happen in almost all sexual relationships in Golding — between Pincher and Mary, between Sammy and Beatrice, between Roger and Goody and now between Oliver and Evie. And we have seen that this Sartrean view of human psychology does not satisfy Golding, for it does not allow for a genuine relationship between "I" and "Thou," between Self and Other.<sup>9</sup> It is the horror, the sheer immorality of Oliver's demand, and of his intention to exploit her that leads Evie to tell Olly's father about their relationship — coupled, possibly, with a desire to offset and discredit any slip of the tongue that Oliver might make to his parents about her relationship to her father. She must have realized the risk she was taking that Oliver would air all, had he known it, about "Me 'n' Dad" (PY 94, 100).

Evie would not have minded a relationship with Oliver that was not based on sex alone. Yet we must remember that Oliver himself is physically similar to Piggy of *Lord of the Flies*. Although Bobby is "three inches taller" than Olly, and reasonably well-muscled from his boxing exercises, Olly is heavier than he and admits



to being clumsily built, "an oaf" (PY 29). He has "a different accent" from Bobby, and has an ugly face. After he goes to Oxford, he wears thick glasses to correct myopia. Evie teases him when she returns to Stilbourne,

"You look so solemn in glasses!"  
Deftly she reached forward with both hands  
and tweaked off my spectacles. The night blurred  
(PY 104).

Olly cannot see without them.

Oliver returns to Stilbourne in 1963 in his "car of superior description," and while his car is being serviced visits Bounce's grave and her house. When he returns to his car with Henry, we come to realize that Oliver remains a grade-two thinker, not really interested in discovering the "Truth" of things. When he looks at the materialistic Henry eye to eye, he sees his own face looking back — reminding him that the physical world and its money is more important to him than the world of imagination, of love, of memories of the past, of genuine music, for which "like Henry, I would never pay more than a reasonable price" (PY 216-17).

### III

In each of the three sections of the novel, the action follows similar lines: in the first, Oliver responds to the genuine love that Evie is willing to give to him and requires from him with demands for physical sex; in the second, he responds to the offered love of Evelyn with incomprehension and ignorance; and in the third,



Henry uses the offered love of Bounce to make money and Oliver proclaims his *post-mortem* hatred for her. In each case, selfless love is rejected and the person who exhibits genuine love is hurt. Yet Ptah-hotep's words still stand as the epigraph of the novel: "Make for yourself love, the beginning and end of the heart." Oliver cannot develop genuine love for Evie and Evelyn because he is married to the social structure in which he was raised and to his looming career as chemist. The message of the novel is the very diagnosis of the disease with which Stilbourne — indeed, the whole world — is afflicted. Golding is doing here with his microcosm of Stilbourne almost exactly the same thing that he did with the boys on the island in *Lord of the Flies*, and the novel is almost as much a fable. He is showing what is wrong with society, "why it's no go" — why Stilbourne will never rise above its name.

The very nature of the novel, then, demands that the town in which the action is set have no truly successful or outstanding produce, for what grade-one thinker could rise from such a stultifying environment? The novel portrays destroyed potential. And that potential does not rest with the middle class, which is too caught up in its social role-playing. It must rather come from the people regarded by the town, and by Oliver, as eccentric, as misfits, as "phenomena." Each section of the novel has its "phenomenon," although Golding has portrayed each of them in such a way that the bulk of his readers, prejudiced as they are, will not see their essential goodness. This point has been demonstrated all too well by some of



the critics of *The Pyramid*, such as Bernard F. Dick, who, in dismissing Evie as a "whore" misses the whole point of the novel.<sup>10</sup> We tend in society to condemn out of hand the promiscuous girl, the homosexual, and the thwarted spinster; they have come to be "types" that most writers, including Golding himself, have used to some advantage, relying on the prejudice of readers to convey the message as tightly and tritely as possible. But in *The Pyramid*, Golding turns the tables on his readers, as he so often does, so that they are left observing the situation from Oliver's perspective instead of from Golding's. For Evie, although promiscuous, is innocent; Evelyn, although homosexual, is wise; and Bounce, although eccentric, is in the final months of her life, happy and at peace. Evie, Evelyn and Bounce are not prejudiced against people except insofar as they have been hurt personally by people. Each of them tries to love, but is thwarted in the attempt. Each of them is attuned, at least by the end of life, to a greater reality outside Stilbourne. All of them eventually leave Stilbourne. Evie and Evelyn are related by name and by their passing friendship with Olly; Bounce is related to Evie in that they both have Electra complexes with their fathers bordering on adoration; Bounce and Evelyn are related in that they are both committed to music or musicals, to teaching or directing the unsophisticated how to play music or to sing. All three search for a kind of tenderness that is not available to them.

Evie tries to love Olly in a way other than sexually, and does not want physically to give herself to him. She regards Oliver





as an ideal candidate for her genuine love and is proud of her relationship to him. She discourages him from pawing her, by telling him that "It's not nice," and explains to him that "everything's different" in their relationship compared to her strictly physical relationship with Robert Ewan (PY 70). But Olly is concerned only with lust, and when he demonstrates to her that her love is not mutual, Evie's idealistic feelings for Olly soon dissipate: once Olly reduces his quest to an obviously physical level, to the total exclusion of spiritual values, Evie has little alternative but to meet him on his own ground. With Oliver's fall from innocence, the physical world changes; the bluebells on which they have lain are "smashed and scattered," a condition that reflects the condition of Evie's own hopes and feelings. Evie is not only unimpressed by his "boyishtattoo," she is disgusted by his animalism, disgusted because their relationship is no longer a sacred segment of the spiritual world she adores, but profane and purely physical like all the others (PY 71, 89). The crippled blackbird that they see on the pile of rotting humus at the top of the embankment symbolizes the struggle Olly has just lost: using its tail to balance itself, it hops about on one leg, hovering precariously between earth and air, between the physical and the spiritual, but contenting itself with the rotten earth. "'Got what you want now, haven't you?'" Evie says, and later, "'Don't think I belong to you, young Oliver!'" When he hugs her amidst "the scent of earth, and the faint, thin smell of the smashed flowers," she is a "sullen and passive lump" in his arms.



Instead of flowers, he struggles through brambles as he descends the hill, symbolizing once more in Golding's typical manner a fall from innocence and Eden (PY 73-74). Evie, although angry, has not materially changed: "I watched her slide, at her accustomed pace, past the vicarage and the cottages, down towards Chandler's Close" (PY 74). She passes the Roman Catholic church where she had so carefully dusted the ornaments before Olly seduced her.

Evie knows that she has been exploited, but is determined to salvage anything of the relationship that might be left. Yet all that is left is the physical Olly, the not-even-well-endowed Olly, a tool that Evie can use in the same way that Olly has used her: as a sexual object, as a substitute for the imagined incestuous relationship with her father (PY 79). After Evie manages to escape Stilbourne, London brings out her true qualities of womanhood. Yet her relationship to her father is neither revealed nor suspected by Olly until his final encounter with her on the streets of Stilbourne. When she finally hints at the true nature of her relationship to her father,

I stood, in shame and confusion, seeing for the first time despite my anger a different picture of Evie in her life-long struggle to be clean and sweet. It was as if this object of frustration and desire had suddenly acquired the attributes of a person rather than a thing; as if I might — as if we might — have made something, music, perhaps, to take the place of the necessary, the inevitable battle (PY 111).

For the first time, Evie's human qualities — her ideals and spiritual awareness as a human being rather than as a lower class "phenomenon" — come into focus for Oliver. The clouds of social prejudice hanging over Stilbourne part slightly to reveal a glimpse of Evie's undiscovered soul.



Evelyn DeTracy mirrors Evie in many ways. Just as Evie searches, on her return to Stilbourne, for "someone alive!" (PY 105), so Evelyn regards Oliver as being "literally the first human being" that he has come across in Stilbourne. He recognizes, perceptively, that Norman is Oliver's "hated rival" for Imogen's love, and adds, "'I think it's time you were cured'" (PY 144). Oliver explains to DeTracy his belief that life, and love, is "'Like chemistry. You can take it as a *thing* — or you can take it as a thing — '" DeTracy, by contrast, views life as "'an outrageous farce . . . with an incompetent director.'" Life ought to be "perceptive," DeTracy says.

In "Thinking As a Hobby," Golding had distinguished between the second-grade thinker who asks, with Pilate, the question "What is Truth?" without expecting an answer, and the grade-one thinker who asks the same question and sets about to find the answer. Oliver, as second-grade thinker, declares, "Evelyn. I want the *truth* of things. But there's nowhere to find it." Evelyn tests Oliver for perceptiveness (and indeed for his reactions to his own transvestitism) by showing him pictures of himself in ballerina's costume, but Oliver's reaction is far from perceptive:

I roared with laughter.

"What on earth's this?"

"Just making a point, Oliver. To the perceptive. Give it back, will you?"

But I was looking through the sheaf. The costume was the same in each and so was Mr. DeTracy. In some of the photographs he was supported by a thick, young man; and in each of these, they gazed deep into each other's eyes. I laughed until it hurt.

"Give them back, now, Oliver."

"What was it?"

"Just a farce, that's all" (PY 149).





The "farce" is the farce of life for the transvestite DeTracy. Oliver is not perceptive enough to comprehend this and therefore fails DeTracy's test. DeTracy's faith in him as "literally the first human being" he has met in Stilbourne is shattered by Oliver's attitude towards the producer's own human weakness.

Golding has said that he does not regard homosexuality as a sin:

Knowing as little about it as I do, when you talk about this being a "sin beyond sin," it might conceivably be no sin at all, in my terms . . . .  
 . . . Now it could possibly be, as I see it, that a homosexual love affair could have no exploitation; in which case, it would have no *sin* (TC 111-12).

The idealistic love DeTracy offered to Oliver becomes poisoned into blatant physical sex as DeTracy grows more drunk. When Oliver returns to him for suggestions as to how he can get his long beefeater's halberd onto the stage when the back stairway is jammed, DeTracy remarks,

"He couldn't get his halberd up the back passage. They'll never believe it."  
 "What shall I do?"  
 "You'll have to enter from in front, then, won't you?"  
 This brought on a paroxysm of shaking; and at the very top of him his tiny tuft of plastered-down hair suddenly broke loose and stood straight up, like a horn.  
 "But they'll see me!" (PY 152).

The second episode is interspersed with such double entendre, and its frivolity is a clear satire of Little Theatres everywhere. But the episode soon degenerates into slapstick with Oliver's problems with the halberd, and Golding tends to overdo the extended metaphor:



What had started as an entry became a furious wrestling match. . . . However, I stuck to my halberd, urged on by a desire to get the thing over and go back to Evelyn . . . .

If anything, getting my halberd down the stairs took longer than getting it up (PY 150-51).

DeTracy's promised cure for Oliver's love for Imogen comes when Imogen loses her temper with Oliver and proves herself to be an awkward singer, out of time, flat, but "indifferent to the fact that she could not sing." Sadly, but with relief, Oliver realizes that DeTracy was correct when he called Imogen "a stupid, insensitive, vain woman" (PY 154). Freed from Imogen, Oliver has just enough time to thank the perceptive producer and put him on the wrong bus — bound for Barchester (PY 155).

Although Evie and Evelyn cannot be called pure grade-one thinkers, they more than anyone else in the first two sections of the novel have insight into the stultifying nature of Stilbourne — insight that Oliver gains — perhaps — only with the narration of the novel. But Bounce Dawlish appears at the end of her life to have bridged the gap between her world of rigid music and another world of peace and tranquility. Oliver, upon his return to Stilbourne in 1963, after he leaves the cemetery where he declares his hatred for Bounce, suddenly finds himself sitting in Bounce's chair beside the river, surrounded by flowers in the centre of a tiny paradise. "The chair stood there, mutely insisting how she had used it — every evening perhaps, in the last summer and autumn, among the midges and swifts" (PY 215). Among the ashes of a bonfire lit by Bounce three years



before, just prior to her death, Oliver finds the symbol of Bounce's music, her father's metronome. He also identifies a smashed bust of Beethoven and a photograph of her father — two articles which had dominated her studio. Suddenly, Oliver has insight into the pathetic struggle represented in the fire — the struggle of Bounce with the structures which had entwined her, her struggle to find her Self. For the first time he can comprehend and empathize: "I sat on her chair, put my elbows on my knees and my face in my hands. I did not know to what or whom my feelings had reference, nor even what they were" (PY 216). He has assumed the exact pose of Rodin's *Thinker*. With his new insight, he recognizes that when she shed her clothes, Bounce had been free and calm and happy, "with a relaxed, smiling face," but then "they put her away until she was properly cured and unhappy again" (PY 216). The music and metronome burned in the bonfire were the clothing of her pursuit of music dominated by her father's prejudices, which had controlled the free expression of her soul. Before her death, she had succeeded in casting them aside. Bounce had, in the last two years of her life, been able to appreciate a sort of heaven. She had rejected the stale, artificial belief in rigid musical patterns and had replaced it with a new appreciation for the music of the universe — the trickle of stream, the flutter of wings, and the deeper pulse of life that by implication is so much more meaningful than mundane patterns imposed on life. Oliver comes to realize that even Bounce Dawlish had a visionary flash before her death. "'Quick to feel, slow to learn. That's



me," he chides himself, regretting his feeling of nausea at her tomb. Henry had recognized that Bounce was "a dear, kind lady," and by the end of the novel, Oliver seems to understand why (PY 216-17).

#### IV

Since *The Pyramid*, Golding has published little of any significance other than two novelettes written within a month of each other early in 1971, and published six months later in *The Scorpion God: Three Short Novels*. The third novelette in the collection, "Envoy Extraordinary," was written just before *Pincher Martin* and was first published in *Sometime, Never* in 1956.<sup>11</sup> The three novels are related in geographical space and historical or prehistorical setting: "The Scorpion God" is set in Egypt, "Clonk Clonk" at the Olduvai Gorge, and "Envoy Extraordinary" in the Mediterranean. All explore pre-rationalistic innocence in a science fiction mode, and all contain the fundamental distinctions between grades of thought characteristic of Golding's fiction. Both "The Scorpion God" and "Envoy Extraordinary" are hypothetical experiments in which Golding inserted a "modern" man into an ancient civilization to see what would happen. In "The Scorpion God," the militaristic Liar overthrows a nation; in "Envoy Extraordinary," as we have seen, the scientist Phanocles is prevented from doing so by the superior wisdom of Caesar, who rejects his inventions and chuffs him off to China. "The Scorpion God," the most serious and difficult of the three works, is set in a prehistoric civilization on the Nile River.





The pre-Egyptian culture of "The Scorpion God" is based on a tradition that underlines the grade-three thought of its adherents, with whom Golding nonetheless sympathizes, for all their "unreason, spiritual pragmatism and capacity for ambiguous belief" (HG 82). Any information that does not fit their limited world view is dismissed as a lie. Paradoxically, the Liar has gained his name by telling true stories about his travels — about the white-skinned inhabitants of what is now England, about the existence of mountains, snow, ice, icebergs, and salt water seas, and most horrendously of all, about sexual relations carried on in these foreign lands between people unrelated by blood. Great House and the Head Man, because they are totally committed to their system of belief, dismiss the truth as fantasy incompatible with observable reality, much as Gulliver's tales of English society were dismissed by the Houyhnhnms in the fourth episode of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Great House, the Head Man and most of their followers are grade-three thinkers who argue feelingly within a closed religious system. The Head Man is controlled totally by the long religious tradition of his ancestors. He is intolerant and inflexible when confronted with rebellion or doubt, and to the end cannot comprehend the Liar's refusal of the gift of death. He constantly reminds other members of the court of their traditional duties, and is so committed to the rules of succession and marriage that he fails to realize that the ten-year-old prince is far weaker physically than his father, and incapable of assuming the duties of godship.



Great House is also a grade-three thinker. He is described as "a man who had few ideas but held those he had without examining them" (SG 10). Indeed, this description fits almost all of his subjects as well. When he fails to complete the race and fails to gather enough stamina to sleep with his daughter, he accepts the inevitable death with a chuckle. He asks no questions, any more than do his servants when "with pride and delight" they too partake of the bowls of poison and sing themselves into the eternal Now, dropping like flies around His coffin (SG 34, 40). Here is absolute, unthinking faith.

What a contrast between this beautiful submission to the will of Necessity and the Liar's fierce fight for survival! The Liar, a grade-two thinker in the extreme, is a Pincher Martin who cares primarily for "the thread of my life," for survival "at all costs." He prefers the transient "now" of life to the eternal "Now" of death, and regards himself as "the only sensible man" in the country. Sensing Pretty Flower's approbation, he plots his own succession to power in terms of a foreign militarism that is to change the character of Egypt and the world.

That Golding is disappointed that the rationalist Liar should have usurped the world is demonstrated in his essay "Egypt from My Inside." When Herodotus, the first Egyptologist, according to Golding, travelled to Egypt and exploded legends and myths with his rational, statistical approach to understanding the universe,



It was a meeting between two opposite psychic worlds — perhaps even a meeting between two ages. It was common sense and experiment at odds with vivid imagination and intellectual sloth.

I salute the Herodotean method grudgingly and am wary of it. It is a lever which controls limitless power, but a power in which I am not interested. The method has begotten that lame giant we call civilization as Frankenstein created his monster. It has forgotten that there is a difference between a puzzle and a mystery. It is pedestrian, terrible and comic (HG 71-72).

The Liar is the precursor of Herodotus. His innovations are borrowed from another people. He anticipates the modern world, with all its sickness and trembling, its militarism and smug reliance on grade-two thought.

One man alone in "The Scorpion God" stands out as potential material for grade-one thought — the old blind man, a seer and prophet resembling Teresias. When he finds out that the Prince is going blind, he can think only of the Notch of Utter Calamity, the devastating flooding of the Nile valley. But he also intuits that something else is wrong, the Prince's attitude. Never before has a potential God been so reluctant to take office. Never before has a Prince preferred the company of a mortal over that of Great House Himself. Confronting the situation realistically and bravely (within the context of the pre-Egyptian world-view), the blind man realizes that if he is to save the people, Great House must be informed that the Prince is going blind. His inopportune message comes at the very moment of the God's collapse. Thus, like Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, he becomes a scapegoat and is thrown into the pit, a martyred





prophet, his message and corollary warning of devastating floods ignored. By the end of the novelette, his intuited prophecy that the river would rise to the Notch of Utter Calamity is close to coming true.

"Clonk Clonk" has a surprise ending similar to that of *Pincher Martin* in that a sudden change of perspective is engineered to give us insight into the "author's way of thinking": with the last paragraph we suddenly find that the Oxford-educated natives apparently living on a commune on a vast game preserve in East Africa are not modern men at all, but primitive ancestors of modern man who lived at least a hundred thousand years ago. Golding's description of the primitive men could just as easily apply to any twentieth century African tribe. There are no overt references to prehistoric animals such as the sabre-toothed tigers and mammoths referred to in *The Inheritors*. All of the animals mentioned — leopards, hyaenas, rhinos, gazelles, antelopes, cattle and chimpanzees — are as extant today as they were a hundred thousand years ago. Only on second reading do we realize the full implications of what Golding is saying in "Clonk Clonk" — that in biological terms man has not changed one iota since his origin as a species, that his evolution since his attainment of "sapiens" status has been purely cultural, and that "one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people" through space and time.<sup>12</sup> The only difference between then and now is the fact that in the twentieth century there are "plenty of people in other places" — the implication being that the tribe in "Clonk Clonk"



was the only extant tribe of *Homo sapiens*, and that all modern races have descended from the Leopard Men.

The obviously English expressions that pervade the work lend light humour to the novelette, but Golding appears to have sacrificed artistic subtlety for trite clichés. Golding used a similar technique in the dialogue of Roger Mason in *The Spire*, as well as in the other short novels. But aside from the obvious contrivance of the dialogue, as Stephen Wall remarked in his review of the collection in *The Observer*, "'Clonk Clonk' is a brilliant demonstration of Golding's well-known ability to make worlds anthropologically remote from us physically immediate; the rudimentary culture of this story feels thoroughly lived in."<sup>13</sup> Wall does not refer to the dialogue, but his point applies to traits of behaviour beyond language. The primitive people resemble modern human beings in such social matters as children playing with dolls, fighting and skipping, Palm's concern with middle age spread and approaching menopause, and Minnow's concern with fashion and neatness. When she learns that the men will not be back for days, Palm teases Minnow: "'You can take your hair out of curlers.'" Minnow's skirt is "shortened to the knee," and the jewellery that the women wear could just as easily be worn in the twentieth century.

Golding's thesis that prehistoric man was essentially the same as modern man in thought as well as in habit can be demonstrated by examining the thought processes of his version of early man. When compared to their modern counterparts, Golding's primitive men



reveal similar fears and prejudices, similar conflicts between belief and reason, and similar, if more simplified, "grades" of thought.

The girls at the camp and the Leopard Men at the ravine equally exhibit symptoms of grade-three thought with their cruelty and mob violence. Gradually, Chimp, too, shows his colours as a grade-three thinker: in order to rationalize away his inexplicable feelings of anguish at being ostracized from the tribe, his terror becomes transmuted into frustrated anger and contempt for the Leopard Men. "Because anger was so much easier to bear than humiliation he dwelt on them, sneering at the plain" (SG 96).

Palm resembles a grade-two thinker in her ability to destroy myth: she replaces myth with reason and even introduces a primitive theory of evolution. Like a modern rationalist, she perceives causal connections as nobody else in the novel is capable of doing. She realizes that she is getting fat, not because the Skywoman wills that she get fat, but because she eats and drinks too much (SG 67). She also makes the connection between sexual intercourse and childbirth, between old age and sterility, and between the human pulse beat and life (SG 94, 95, 110). With consummate skill, she twists logic to suit her own ends, as when she convinces Chimp that he has imagined rather than experienced the orgy in which he was raped by the girls (SG 109).

Yet in spite of her reliance more on reason than on belief, Palm does not entirely dismiss the world of unreason. Her



contempt (and we suspect that she reflects Golding's contempt as well) is directed against the masculine type of religion that kills for the sake of killing, that is submerged in the horror of bloodshed and slaughter. She recognizes the existence of the world of spirit, for in spite of her reasoning powers, her logic, she still feels uneasy (SG 69). Most tribesmen find a scapegoat for their uneasiness by worshipping the fire-spitting volcano, but although Palm is afraid of the physical potential of the volcano, she sees that "the mountain was just a mountain." She refuses to externalize her fears, so that her uneasiness remains "wide, deep, ungraspable as water."

Palm's uneasiness is caused by her growing awareness of the world around her. She has no answers to her questions, but must turn to other human beings for consolation. Both she and Chimp have been alienated and she has seen the need to reach out to him, the need for human contact and compassion that replaces grief with joy. She realizes that through marriage and childbirth, both her life and Chimp's can go on tumultuously over the eons: in their "marriage," the worlds of reason and imagination combine symbolically to provide the ingredients for true human beings who have the potential of either spirit or reason or a combination of both. Chimp and Palm are in fact parodies of Adam and Eve, the precursors of all modern men. Their "union" means an end to alienation to both of them, and their inner peace is symbolized by the Clonk! Clonk! of the title. Chimp, who previously picked ruefully at the callous on his bad foot, now accepts his deformity and dismisses it with the "Clonk!" of a joint





slipping into place.<sup>14</sup> Palm, her childlessness potentially over, imagines that she feels the "clonk" of new life stirring inside her. After Palm's invitation to marry, Chimp dives into the river in a formal baptism into a new existence, wades without trouble through the water and "walks casually" through the woods towards the Leopard Men, unafraid, secure in the happiness of his new alliance (SG 112).

In part, "Clonk Clonk" celebrates the birth of reason, and the marriage of reason and imagination in early man. But the contrast between the two religions of the tribe — that of the women and that of the men — is also a central theme in the novelette. Golding has written that the first interpretable sign that earliest sapient man would have left would have been "a sign of his belief in God."<sup>15</sup> And he has asked what sort of god would emerge from man's mind so early in his existence. Suffice to say that Golding favours "natural" feminine religion over more complex but more ugly masculine ones: its very "naturalness" is a haven for innocence and truth and beauty, for an intuitive reliance on the sacred relationship of things in the universe, and for sincere expression of gratitude for the gifts of a benevolent universe. In their innocence and in the genuine nature of their worship, the serious proponents of this wholesome form of religion, such as Simon in *Lord of the Flies*, Fa in *The Inheritors* and to a lesser degree Palm in "Clonk Clonk," approach the purity and gripping insight into the divine machinery of the cosmos characteristic of true first-grade thought.



*The Pyramid*, "The Scorpion God" and "Clonk Clonk" share with the earlier novels several characteristics that are readily recognizable in most of Golding's prose fiction, such as the imagery of the Fall and patterns of characterization incorporating different types of "thinker," from the rationalists, Olly, the Liar and Palm, to those controlled by emotion and prejudice, such as Olly's mother, the Head Man and the Leopard Men. But these works are decidedly "lesser pomps" (to borrow a phrase from Bernard Dick) — interesting post-scripts to a brilliant but short career in letters. They are much less polished than the earlier works, but at the same time are pleasantly readable if only because they are products of a good writer who seems to have relaxed somewhat from his earlier solemnity of purpose and stringency of style and literary structure. If in the earlier novels Golding sought always to be "in control" (HG 97-99), in the last three works Golding seems much more inclined to leave the plot without clear resolution, relying more on artistry than on art, on wittiness rather than on subtle humour, on situation comedy rather than on high tragedy. There is also a note of cynicism in these works, especially in *The Pyramid*, that seems to betray a personal bitterness, however much it is shrouded in light wit. Golding seems to try too hard not to be earnest in his social commentary. Whatever the reason, there seems to be in the works following *The Spire* a marked deficiency, as if the strident metaphysical and mythopoeic inspiration of the novelist had suddenly become impoverished. Perhaps in the process of creating his masterpiece, his well of inspiration had run irrevocably dry — or at least had become muddled by an increasing preoccupation with the mundane.



## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

### I

In all of his novels, Golding has moulded his characters to conform to specific character types that roughly parallel the types that he categorized (and caricatured) in "Thinking As a Hobby" as third, second and first grade thinkers. In those of his works that are specifically didactic as social criticism or parody, such as *Lord of the Flies*, *The Pyramid*, and the short novels, these character types tend to be portrayed as caricatures, from the "fair-haired boy" and the "fat rationalist" figures depicted in the characterization of Ralph and Piggy, to the scheming Liar in "The Scorpion God." This tendency towards caricature is a weakness in the novels, although it serves Golding's didactic purpose in his fables. The extent to which Golding succeeds in suppressing the tendency towards caricature in each novel is the measure of his success as a convincing novelist; thus Ralph is convincing as a character existing beyond a fabulistic cipher only because he transcends his unidimensional mould so that we can see his inner motivations and can come to understand the personal struggle with which he is confronted. The central weakness of "Envoy Extraordinary" is the fact that the characters never appear to grow or develop organically: by the end of the story, Caesar is still the wise ruler, Phanocles is still the same old rationalist, Mamillius is as caught up in himself as ever, Euphrosyne remains silent — indeed, the only improvement in the situation over the first scene is the death of Posthumus.





Similarly, in *Free Fall* we are presented with a succession of faces, from Ma to Halde, which have obtruded in Sammy's life, and although memory may well consist of successions of such images haunting one's past, Golding fails to make his unidimensional puppets come truly to life. Miss Pringle is remembered only for the ways in which she had hurt Sammy by showing her own lack of perceptiveness; yet in his unidimensional portrait of her world and his condemnation of it and her, Sammy too proves to be imperceptive. In *The Pyramid*, Golding is nowhere near as successful as he is in *Free Fall*, if only because the narrator himself is so much a caricature, and no character ever seems to grow; even the hints that Evie and Bounce might have "grown" to an awareness of some universal significance are not enough to offset the rather stilted parody of an English village. Perhaps one of the greatest problems inherent in English society is the very tendency to reduce individuals to caricatures, to pigeonhole them according to social station or education, and this Golding obviously intended to satirize; but in the process, Golding has succumbed to the tendency, to the extent that he expects his readers to judge his characters according to the types that he artificially created within the context of his essays and novels.

Just as in *Lord of the Flies* Ralph is seen to grow, so that he becomes more complex than he at first appears, so in the other successful novels Golding lets the characters take wing on their own. In *The Inheritors*, for example, Lok as Neanderthal man is not the kind of being whom we can easily cast as a "type" for normal human



behavior, and the fact that we must view the modern men through Neanderthal eyes is a technique of distancing that allows us to assess the new people in ways other than through blatant caricature. We still tend to fit Twal into one category and Vivani into another, but all the new people grow from their experience; they have learned something about themselves that they didn't know before. Indeed, Lok and Fa grow too; but it is on Tuami that we come to focus at the end, a man who has set himself apart from the others all along, and who in the last chapter shifts from his stance of cynic and becomes a creator, an artist, understanding at last the metaphysical meaning of the conflict that he has just survived.

In *Pincher Martin*, the imagery of masks is set up as a backdrop against which the real Christopher Martin is presented. Here again Golding is successful in transcending the character type that he sought to display; indeed a measure of his success is the degree to which his readers are able to empathize with Christopher and give him a status that he does not really deserve. In *The Spire*, the same thing happens; Jocelin is at once villain and hero, no mere caricature. Pangall, Father Adam and the dumb sculptor remain unidimensional, perhaps, but most of the characters are exceedingly organic: Mason deteriorates from brilliant contractor to babbling drunk; Rachel develops from nagging wife to concerned citizen; Goody is degraded from faithful child of God to Mason's mistress; the faithful Father Anselm allows his hatred to fester until he manages to obtain revenge; and Jocelin himself changes, constantly changes, shifting in attitude



towards his church, towards his workers, towards the construction, towards himself, and towards the outside world represented by Aunt Alison.

In spite of the subtlety of Golding's portraits in his best works, the three grades of thought are discernible working in and on the characters. Golding is most successful when he tones down or mutes these grades of thought so that they are less obvious, often by portraying grade-three thinkers acting as a mob rather than as individuals. The boys of *Lord of the Flies* who, motivated by irrational urges, form a pack and kill first the boy with the mulberry scar and then Simon and Piggy, are mirrored in the panic-stricken and violent new people of *The Inheritors*, who band together to "defend" themselves against the misunderstood Neanderthals. Again, scenes of mob action and hysteria are in evidence in "Envoy Extraordinary" when the slaves and soldiers under Posthumus destroy the Amphitrite and try to blow up the palace — all because of a misunderstanding that they are too irrational to sort out. In *Free Fall*, mob scenes are described both in the schoolyard and in the political arena; Philip, for example, behaves like Ralph and Roger when a fight breaks out, having an overpowering desire to hurt a helpless victim. Mountjoy meets his future wife, Taffy, at a Communist Party rally at which a riot breaks out, and her father, a town councillor, is hurt. More mob scenes involving grade-three thinkers are to be found in *The Spire*, first with the pack of workmen who, out of frustration and superstition, pursue Pangall, murder him, and bury his body under the crossways,





and later in the street riot in which Jocelin is stripped and beaten. In *The Pyramid*, the action of a group of grade-three thinkers is more subtly engineered in the description of the S. O. S. and its exclusion of members of the lower classes; in "The Scorpion God," collective grade-three thought is demonstrated by the willing slaves and subjects of Great House who mindlessly sacrifice themselves while singing the god to His Eternal Now; and in "Clonk Clonk" the action of the Leopard Men in their attack on Chimp rivals in intensity the scene at Castle Rock in *Lord of the Flies*.

Individual grade-three thinkers are also recognizable from novel to novel. We have seen how the sinister Roger resembles Philip of *Free Fall*; he also resembles in his tactics Christopher Martin, who maliciously hurts Peter in a motorcycle race, and attempts to murder Nat out of a simple jealousy. Posthumus is similarly motivated: he is jealous of Mamillius' relationship to Caesar and suspicious of Phanocles' motives. The malicious grade-three thinker is also to be found in the women characters, especially in Twal of *The Inheritors*, Miss Massey and Miss Pringle of *Free Fall*, and Oliver's mother and Bounce Dawlish of *The Pyramid*. But this type of grade-three thinker is most clearly developed in Father Anselm of *The Spire*, whose sole purpose in life has come to be to revenge himself on Jocelin. He represents the most unpalatable type of grade-three thinker, the religious fanatic: we see the origins of such fanaticism in Jack at the beginning of *Lord of the Flies*, when he insists on the rigid discipline of the choir simply to show off. It is again in evidence





in the hated Marlan of *The Inheritors*, whose religious rituals fuel the fears of his tribe rather than help assuage them. A similar fanaticism of a militaristic kind is seen in Posthumus, but it is more clearly and typically manifest in Father Watts-Watt of *Free Fall*, Jocelin of *The Spire*, and the Head Man in "The Scorpion God." Again the women characters, with whom Golding has most trouble in terms of convincing characterization, figure prominently: Mary of *Pincher Martin* and Beatrice of *Free Fall* retain their prudish fundamentalist attitudes (like Golding's childhood sweetheart, Ruth) because they have never thought to challenge the system of religious values in which they were raised. Miss Massey and Miss Pringle are more sure of themselves theologically; but theirs is a textbook approach to religion that is equally reprehensible, and which rivals in its inadequacy Bounce Dawlish's textbook approach to music. Only Fa and Vivani of *The Inheritors*, Evie of *The Pyramid*, and Palm of "Clonk Clonk" manage to escape the prudish stereotype that Golding gives to most of his female characters.

Some of Golding's most successful portraits of individuals confronting destiny are those of grade-two thinkers; but at the same time with this type of character he has a tendency to fall into caricature more frequently and more devastatingly than with any other type. Piggy is a case in point; like his hair, he never seems to grow or develop from the position he was in at the beginning of the novel. Throughout the novel, he stagnates. He remains as naive about human behavior at the end as he was at the beginning. He apparently knows



all about the physical world, but he proves himself incapable of learning anything about human values. Because he does not change, he becomes a stereotype or caricature with whom we cannot totally empathize; indeed, we tend to agree with Jack when the hunter speaks to him contemptuously, and we recognize that Ralph is a fool to go along with Piggy to try to retrieve the glasses. Piggy's murder is not as shocking to the reader as Simon's, nor is the confrontation at Castle Rock as dramatically compelling as the ritual before Simon's death and the final hunt for Ralph. Piggy simply does not have a convincing enough *human* personality to get upset about: we are much more concerned about Ralph, who has proved himself to be a full-fledged human being who at least tries to cope with his situation in a practical way.

Piggy's personality is reflected and expanded in that of Phanocles; had Piggy been provided with the requisite tools and metal, he would no doubt have done on the island microcosm exactly what Phanocles does: he would have invented tools of destruction. Phanocles is merely a grown-up Piggy in another age, and they share the same misanthropy. They are both short-sighted in outlook as well as physically; they are both parodies of scientific rationalists. Their character type recurs again and again in Golding, and we suspect from what he has said about his father and about his own youth that these characters are modelled after people in Golding's own life. Similarly, Nick Shales and Halde of *Free Fall* are both rationalists, seeking answers for social perfectibility in political parties or



through science or behaviorism. And Olly and his father in *The Pyramid* also reflect Golding and his father as Golding has described them. Physically, Olly is almost identical to Piggy, and his father is described in exactly the same terms as is Nick Shales.

Another type of grade-two thinker portrayed by Golding is the man torn between two worlds, such as Ralph, who attempts to adopt grade-two thought in spite of the fact that he feels most comfortable in the world of spirit; Tuami, who has to decide what is most important, the practical blade or artistic haft of the knife; Christopher Martin, whose blatant rationalism is shattered with the realization that the world of spirit will have the final say; Sammy Mountjoy, who, like Ralph, rightfully belongs to the world of spirit but artificially adopts a system of logic so that he can rationally deny the value of the moral code to which he subconsciously adheres; Roger Mason, who is torn between his responsibility to complete the project he has started and his doubts that the project is physically possible; The Liar of "The Scorpion God," who, shown the horrors of the Eternal Now, must find an answer to the threat of death in militarism and cool diplomacy; and in Palm of "Clonk Clonk," who realizes that she does not have all the answers, but will strive to understand why the mountain and the moon have more significance for her than their mere physical presence. All of these characters manage to extend themselves beyond the bounds of caricature to become human beings with whom we can identify. These are the most successful of Golding's characters, if only because each of them is confronted with a dilemma that he has





to work out for himself in the course of the novel.

Less successful are the portraits of grade-one thinkers. Golding said of such refined thinkers that they were "few and far between," and very few people indeed in the novels can be called grade-one thinkers. There is Simon of *Lord of the Flies*, a token martyr whose perceptions of paradise (and whose death) are described in the most brilliant poetic prose anywhere in Golding. There is Fa, who in many ways parallels Simon, down to her inability to communicate and her final death impaled on a blossoming tree. There is Caesar, a man of consummate wit, a very endearing old soul, whose wisdom might just rival that of Einstein or Copernicus. There is Nat, who in theological terms shows that he understands precisely mankind's metaphysical situation (at least, as it is present to Martin after death). And there is the blind Teresias figure in "The Scorpion God," a seer who, like Nat, is perceptive enough to realize that the future of his friend the prince — indeed, of the whole kingdom — is in jeopardy. But other than this handful of scantily-sketched seers, prophets, martyrs and wise men, Golding does not go to great lengths to present an archetypal first class thinker. All of them, except perhaps Fa, are predictable caricatures of saintly types. Again, the power of Golding's characterization lies not in the caricature but in the process of rising above oneself, to better oneself, to achieve grade-one thought even though one might not be a "born" grade-one thinker (if, indeed, there is such a thing). Fa, once released from the strictures placed on her by the rest of the Neanderthal band,



rises above her situation and becomes like a grade-one thinker in her attitude towards Oa, the ice-women, her situation, and possibilities of countering her situation by concerted action. A similar process is seen to work in Sammy, who, after reopening the door to the world of spirit, attempts to transcend the limitations of physical experience by recognizing existence itself in terms of miracle. His creative experience in writing his book is a demonstration of his redirected efforts to come to terms with both the world of spirit and the world of matter, and in the process he transcends both worlds. Jocelin, too, living in his world of spirit, is forced to come to terms with the other half of experience — in this case the physical reality of the fact that the spire rests on nothing. Again his own faith ultimately provides a bridge between both worlds — along with a deep appreciation for the meaning of creation, both his own and God's.

In spite of these powerful portraits of men who through determination and anguish come to comprehend the inner workings of the universe, the fact remains that Golding does not always sustain a requisite level of subtlety of characterization, and this failure is a central weakness of his novels. But it is by no means the only weakness, and if we are to gain a satisfactory overview of William Golding as artist, we must concern ourselves with the other weaknesses and flaws in the fabric of his art. How do his novels "measure up" to conventional literary standards, and to each other? Is *Lord of the Flies* better or worse than *The Pyramid*? What techniques characterize his good novels? His bad ones? We shall examine the novels once more.

In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding is often inconsistent. He was not



the least bit careful about researching the scientific possibilities not only of a passenger tube surviving impact without injury to its occupants, but also of the process of putrefaction of dead meat, of the effect of light on glasses designed to correct myopia, or of general optics. It is not credible, for example, that the dead parachutist bobbing on top of the mountain should have his flesh eaten away to the bone some thirty-six hours after he landed there (LF 181). It is not credible that the pig's head on a stick, the symbol of the Lord of the Flies itself, should be reduced to a dry, bleached skull that falls apart after only two days of weathering flies and the sun (LF 288). It is patently impossible that Piggy's glasses, designed to correct myopia, and therefore concave, could produce fire (LF 53),<sup>1</sup> and it is not at all likely that a ship, visible on the horizon from sea level, should be almost out of sight when viewed from the top of a mountain (LF 83, 85).

There is nothing to indicate that Golding was aware of the many technical flaws in the novel; indeed the process by which he came to a decision to write his first published novel, almost by accident, is telling in itself:

I was sitting one side of the fire and Ann was sitting the other, and I had just been reading a God-awful book to . . . David [the Golding's son], a book about boys on an island, the usual adventure story. . . . I remember saying to Ann, "Oh, I'm so tired of this business. Wouldn't it be fun to write a book about boys on an island and see what really happens?" And she said, "That's an awfully good



idea. You do that." So I got a piece of paper and started to work out the story, and then everything went on, just like that, and there was no strain beforehand (*TC* 60).

For the literary critic, the question of Golding's talents as writer lies not so much in the scientific accuracy or plausibility of his plot and invention as in the ways in which Golding has managed, for two decades, to "carry it off" so that only a very few critics have questioned the plausibility of some of the events contained in the novel. Obviously the scientific inconsistencies do not obtrude on the reader except on an analytical level, a level with which for some reason critics of Golding have not often seriously grappled. Most criticism has dealt with the levels of myth and fable in the novel without considering the fundamental narrative level.

The inconsistencies and implausibilities are camouflaged by a clever confusion of sequence of action and event. This confusion hinges on the third chapter, "Huts on the Beach" in which time, which in the first two chapters was treated sequentially, becomes telescoped so that the illusion is created of several weeks or months having passed (*LF* 61-62). Golding gives us in this chapter a transition between the first two days on the island (Chapters One and Two) and the last six days (Chapters Four through Twelve). A wealth of contradictions spring up in this transitional chapter, and it is well to isolate them. If the pigs are as plentiful and as close and as widespread as





they appear to be in subsequent chapters, then why has Jack, the diligent hunter, taken so long to discover them? And why, after weeks on the island, have the shelters not yet been constructed? Both the failure of Jack to supply food and the failure of Ralph to supply shelter after weeks of living on the island betoken more than mere shirking of responsibility. Once again the inconsistencies are fully explicable only in terms of the actual narrative technique. They are flaws in the pacing of the novel, oversights in sequence of action, of which the author does not seem to be aware.

From first draft to last, *Lord of the Flies* took only "three or four months" to write (TC 61). Perhaps this speed in itself explains the many oversights in consistency and probability that slipped by Golding. But it must be remembered that the genre out of which *Lord of the Flies* stemmed was often characterized by a lack of credibility and inaccuracy of detail. In *A Coral Island*, for example, two of the boys are taken hundreds of miles away from the island and then sail back again on their own to pick up their friend. Without compass or sextant, indeed without experience, they navigate by "dead reckoning" — yet remain perfectly on course. Ballantyne would say that God guided the boys, and therefore they did not need a compass, but this does little to assuage a feeling that the writer has taken shortcuts. Even Mark Twain revealed an appalling laziness in researching the fauna of the Sahara when he



had Tom Sawyer encounter lions and other jungle beasts in the middle of the desert. Of course, in this kind of literature, the intended readers are not as demanding of factual detail as are adults, and perhaps the writers of children's literature are to a degree justified in paying more attention to characterization than to fact. It could be argued that Golding was deliberately parodying this propensity in children's adventure literature, as indeed he parodied Forester's *Hornblower* in an earlier unpublished novel.<sup>2</sup> But such parody would not be consistent with Golding's avowed determination to *correct* the romantic notions of earlier adventure writers, to "see what really happens." The fact is that Golding was so concerned with what was happening to the personalities of the boys on the island that he overlooked several physical details that are, of course, secondary in importance. The power of Golding's novel lies in its portrayal of the interaction of different types of people, not in details of setting that are incidental to this portrayal.

Golding's use of inaccurate detail is not the only area of weakness in the novel. Often Golding uses far-fetched coincidence to illustrate his fable. Sometimes exaggerated irony has a bathetic effect, as at the end of Chapter Five, when Ralph cries, "'If only they could send us something grownup . . . a sign or something.'" The "something grownup," "a sign," arrives right on cue in the form of the dead parachutist. The parachutist's



departure is equally opportune, coinciding as it does with Simon's death. Not only does the corpse blow off the mountain at the right time, it descends at exactly the spot where Simon's murder is committed (*LF* 189). The arrival of that other man of war, the naval officer, is even more opportune — again, we suspect, an "easy way out" of a dilemma for Golding (*LF* 246).

In spite of its many flaws (and these are only the most obvious ones),<sup>3</sup> *Lord of the Flies* remains a great novel. For its portrayal of human nature and the spirit of man, or at least of youth, in the twentieth century is untouched by imperfections of setting and action that are quite incidental to character development and behavior. More important than the physical qualities of Piggy's glasses and the optical impossibility of using them like a magnifying glass to start a fire are the symbolic qualities associated with the glasses. Piggy's total reliance on them symbolizes, as we have seen, the myopic reliance of the technocrat on his scientific inventions. On another level, from man's intelligence, symbolized by Piggy and his glasses, springs fire, which is both constructive and destructive. In terms of conflict between value systems the glasses become an important symbol of the practical, in juxtaposition to the conch; Piggy naively assumes that when the boys raid the camp they are after the conch, the symbol for the seat of democratic power. In fact they are after his glasses, which become no mere symbol





but a weapon of anarchy through which the island is eventually destroyed by fire — a symbol as powerful for the island microcosm as the atom bomb is in the macrocosm. Yet we still cannot ignore the fact that much of the novel — all those aspects concerned with fire — is based on a scientific impossibility.

Of greater concern than the rate of decomposition that occurs in flesh in a tropical jungle is the rate of disintegration of the patterns of civilization that have been imposed on the boys. The speed with which the boys become savages is best exemplified by Roger, who in Chapter Four first demolishes the littluns' castles (*LF* 76), and then throws rocks at Henry, aiming at first to miss because "Roger's arm was conditioned" by civilization (*LF* 78). Five days later, on Castle Rock, he throws stones at Ralph and Piggy, this time not to miss, and finally levers the boulder down on Piggy's head (*LF* 221-222). Roger's actions, and his silence and unpredictability, give the boy a sinister air from the beginning: "There was a slight, furtive boy who no one knew, who kept to himself with an inner intensity of avoidance and secrecy. He muttered that his name was Roger and was silent again" (*LF* 29).

Golding has the knack of painting portraits like this with the minimum of strokes. Thus Ralph is indelibly imprinted on our minds with the initial description: "The fair boy stopped and jerked his stockings with an automatic gesture that made the



jungle seem for a moment like the Home Counties" (*LF* 11 ).

Similarly the appearance of Piggy is deftly captured: "He was shorter than the fair boy and very fat. He came forward, searching out safe lodgements for his feet, and then looked up through thick spectacles" (*LF* 12). There is little more description of either boy, nor is any necessary. The glasses are as distinct a symbol as the stockings. From here on, Piggy and Ralph are distinguished only as "the fat boy" and "the fair boy", but we have a clear picture of each. Details of personality and personal background are quickly sketched in through their dialogue. Piggy's lower class upbringing is emphasized by his non-standard grammar and syntax: ("Can't catch me breath." "I'm sorry I been such a time. Them fruit." "You can't half swim." "I didn't expect nothing"). Each major character is given a symbol that seems suitably to reflect his personality. Thus, while Piggy's glasses reflect his state of mind, Ralph is identified at the beginning as "Him with the shell" (*LF* 30 ). Jack is distinguished at first by his cloak and cap and gold badge (*LF* 26 ), and later by warpaint and a spear. Even more succinct are the behavior traits of the boys as displayed in the first assembly. Jack is immediately cast as a tyrant, Roger is sinister, Piggy proves himself a coward, and Simon, who faints at the outset, is shy and friendly (*LF* 27-29 ).



Most of the "flaws" we have isolated in *Lord of the Flies* are scientific inconsistencies that Golding apparently overlooked. Most of the "flaws" that critics have discovered in *The Inheritors* are anthropological in nature. But whereas Golding did little research into the scientific background of *Lord of the Flies*, he is adamant that he researched his second novel thoroughly:

When I wrote *The Inheritors*, I had read about all there was to read. In fact, if you found a contradiction between Neanderthal man as he is now known and Neanderthal man as I wrote about him, my guess is you will find that it has been discovered since. . . . I would guess my knowledge of Neanderthal man was about as wide as it could be for an amateur at that time (TC 106-07).

H. G. Wells' *Outline of History* was one admitted source of Golding's information. Wells' thesis, to which, for all its datedness, Golding seems to have adhered, was that the conflict between Neanderthal Man and Cro-Magnon Man took place between 25,000 and 40,000 years ago. His description of the fauna at that time includes references to the animals that appear or are implied in *The Inheritors*: the sabre-toothed tiger, the woolly mammoth and the cave hyaena and reindeer. Wells wrote, "As the weather hardened to its maximum of severity, the Neanderthal men — already, it would seem, acquainted with the use of fire — began to seek shelter under rock ledges and in caves, and so leave remains behind them."<sup>4</sup> Modern anthropologists would deny that Neanderthal men were as apelike as Golding describes them; yet whatever theories are advanced to refute his description of Neanderthal Man, Golding, within the context of science fiction, has invented the species in a fable depicting guilt and innocence.



He said in an interview with Jack Biles that the Neanderthals "weren't quite as uninventive as I made them," but whether or not the Neanderthals shaped stones, "I'm not concerned." Professor Biles also quotes an interview with Maurice Dolbier in the *New York Herald Tribune*, in which Golding said:

I picture the Neanderthals as a primitive, but good race that existed before the Fall, wiped out by *Homo sapiens* simply because it wasn't evil enough to survive. Its animal innocence was no match for our capacity for surviving at all costs (TC 106).

If Golding's intention was simply to portray this situation, then there is no doubt that he succeeded in what he set out to do. But the way in which he chose to do it has led to confusion, for the work is more like an opaque riddle than a novel. Constantly, on first reading, one must pause to ask oneself, What's happening? Often the reader must backtrack, or flip back to clarify allusions to symbols or events that seem vaguely familiar. As in *Lord of the Flies*, these allusions are carefully engineered by Golding; but because many events mentioned in passing are brought back into play later on in significant ways, a single reading of *The Inheritors* will not suffice.

Details of setting and plot are revealed to us only slowly and with much mental labour on the part of the reader. Yet once the details are sorted out, the novel presents us with a very moving picture of innocence and an objective view of the fallen





state of modern man. We as readers must use Lok's eyes, but Lok's perceptions are unreliable in that he cannot draw accurate conclusions from his observations: "There was too much to see and he became eyes again that registered and perhaps would later remember what now he was not aware of" (*IN* 15). The technique is particularly effective — and concomitantly difficult — in Chapter Eight, where we view the new people close up through the eyes of Lok. In order to comprehend the events of this chapter, the reader must totally dissociate himself from Lok's personality and prejudices, and must conceptualize the visual data for himself.

Golding has said that the technique of keeping the reader incompletely informed is his favorite and most effective writing device:

When you are telling a story one of the technical things is not to tell a bit of it, because if you wait for a chapter and then your reader thinks, "My God, that's what happened," this is ten times more powerful a communication than the direct saying of "Then he went and then he did" (*TC* 67).

Golding suspends his reader's awareness of the existence of modern man (and yet gives many hints of his presence) in order to effect reader identification with the Neanderthals. His clever invention of Neanderthal dialogue and thought processes helps this identification, and once we are accustomed to the new, simple language we tend to forget that the eyes we peer through are those of a pre-human being. Then suddenly, at the end, we are brought up short, and reminded with a vengeance, in a typical Golding end game.



Much of the negative criticism of Golding's novels has concentrated on what have been called his "gimmick" endings -- the twists in plot in the last chapters that completely uproot the cosy point of view that the reader had hitherto adopted. Critics who objected to this early hallmark of Golding's writing suggested that the technique was a cheap trick which enabled the author to escape from a tangled web of detail without resolving anything. If it worked for *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors*, the technique was not nearly so well received in *Pincher Martin*, if only because Golding once again became too blatant. Some reviewers of the third novel were inordinately irate; they objected to being led down the garden path for two hundred pages, only to find that the whole book was a tasteless practical joke.<sup>5</sup> A debate on the ending of *Pincher Martin* in the *Times Literary Supplement* continued for weeks,<sup>6</sup> and Golding's New York publishers, Harcourt, Brace and World, insisted that Golding change the title of the book to make its message more explicit. Thus in America it was published as *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin*. Golding has defended his method at some length:

This is a question of technique, which is the responsibility of the writer, because he is trying to say something, trying to affect somebody, and if he does it this way, then it is the responsibility of his position to say, "I *must* fool him this long, because at the end of it I'm really going to hit him for six; you see, I'm really going to hit him hard there." Because he needs to be hit hard there (TC 67).

Golding hit the reader hardest at the end of *Pincher Martin*: the reader does not realize Martin is dead until the last word of the novel.<sup>7</sup>



Yet the reader must not overreact to the trick ending, for it works not simply as a humorous device, but as an artistic one as well. If one's final awareness in life does indeed consist of a series of flashes in which one's past life is reviewed before the fading consciousness, then from where the reader stands at the end of the book (having just read the "last word," so to speak), the life of Martin as revealed to the reader during the novel does indeed "flash before his eyes." For we have a total picture of the type of person that Pincher is. And because he is dead, and cannot change a thing, because the process of "Becoming" has terminated, the reader is left to review what *is* his "Being" at the moment of death. The reader is given exactly the same view of Christopher's life as Christopher had at the instant of death.

In *Pincher Martin*, the anonymous naval officer of *Lord of the Flies* gains an identity as Davidson: the scene is repeated, down to the ratings standing by the boat. Davidson goes to the lean-to containing Pincher's bloated, battered and stinking body to jot down details from the identity disc. Not only do we see Christopher Hadley Martin as he really is from an objective viewpoint — derelict, vacant, a cracked shell, a drowned and rotted cadaver that has been washed up on the shore of the Hebrides Islands — but we see another, objective view of Christopher as he might have appeared in life in the personality of Davidson, whose name is linked to "Christopher" the Christ-bearer, and whose rank and duties are almost identical





to those of the dead man. Both men have the same habits: both "grin without humour" in difficult situations (*PM* 61, 203),<sup>8</sup> and both are concerned with obtaining, and console themselves with, "a tot" of rum (*PM* 52, 206). Howard Babb has gone one step further in his interpretation of the role of Davidson:

Surely Davidson is not just a naval officer, but Death itself: he comes out of the "west" and "a wintry sunset" on "a black shape"; works "seven days a week"; is described as a death's head, with "eyes that did not blink", eyes "just a fraction too wide open", and "a grin without humour" on the "lower part" of his face.<sup>12</sup>

In support of Babb's thesis, I should add that Campbell obliquely refers to Davidson's "sad harvest," leaving hardly any doubt that he regards Davidson as The Grim Reaper (*PM* 208).

The final chapter, as Babb's detailed analysis indicates, is rich in pictorial description incorporating variation of sentence length and rich vocabulary; in this it is unlike the prose of most of the rest of the novel:

There was a leaden tinge to the water except in the path of the drifter — a brighter valley of red and rose and black that led back to the dazzling horizon under the sun (*PM* 202).

Alliteration, consonance and assonance work appealingly here: "water" is echoed in "drifter" and "brighter"; and "brighter valley of red and rose and black" could be a line of poetry, so rich is it in its juggling of the "b", "r" and "l" sounds. "Black" is again echoed in "back," and "valley" in "dazzlingly." "Horizon under the sun" provides a final assonance that helps the reader visualize the sunset.



In *Pincher Martin*, Golding was concerned largely with portraying the consciousness of his protagonist in a way that recalls his treatment of Ralph's consciousness and that anticipates the stream of consciousness technique of *Free Fall*. Yet Christopher is so concerned with effecting survival, so concerned with outlining details of his illusory physical environment, that we only rarely are allowed to enter his genuine centre, the mind behind the mental facade which Christopher is deluded enough to believe is informing him of "true" sense experiences. Even when he contemplates the possibility of rescue, "He examined the thought and found that the whole idea was neutral as the mussels had become, harsh and negative as the fresh water" (PM 97). Whenever he lets go of the facade of superimposed thoughts, whenever he thinks genuinely from the centre, he lapses into negativity and experiences "a gap of darkness" (PM 67, 167). More and more, he is made to speak aloud, to express his deepest fears in a stream-of-consciousness mode which reaches its peak in the twelfth chapter, when Christopher is forced to recognize the truth of his situation with the advent of the black lightning. Then he suffers anguish and loneliness, stemming from the observation, "Because of what I did I am an outsider and alone" (PM 181). Again this passage looks ahead, in both technique and in theme, to *Free Fall*.

Yet *Free Fall* stands very much on its own among Golding's novels; there are no shortcuts or "gimmicks" as appeared in the first three major works, and the narrative style retains a consistent brilliance: it is almost as if Golding had taken one of Ralph's interior



monologues and expanded it to autobiographical length:

I was very small and I was sitting on the stone surround of the pool and fountain in the centre of the park. There was bright sunlight, banks of red and blue flowers, green lawn. There was no guilt but only the splash and splatter of the fountain at the centre. I had bathed and drunk and now I was sitting on the warm stone edge placidly considering what I should do next (FF 5).

The symbol of the fountain informs the technique that Golding is using. We recall what Dorothy Richardson had to say about the stream of consciousness technique — that the process of consciousness, with its recycling of memories through time, more closely resembles that of a fountain than a stream. We recall too Golding's earlier use of the concept of the "centre" which here is both the centre of the physical fountain and later, in the German prison camp, becomes the centre of consciousness itself. Mountjoy's centre in this time of innocence is mirrored in the natural beauty of the centre of the park, with its flowers and lawn and sunshine. Golding gives us a picture of pure innocence, using a technique familiar to us from *Lord of the Flies*. He presents us with a series of sense experiences in quick succession — the senses of taste, touch, hearing and sight. And he presents us, too, in this first passage, with insight into the emphasis appropriate to a budding artist: the degrees of light and the red, blue and green colours. Again he uses alliteration of the sibilants for poetic effect, and combines pleasingly assonance and onomatopoeia ("splash and splatter"). The rhythm and cadence of the passage is that of poetry: "I was



sitting on the stone surround of the pool and fountain in the centre of the park." From the first sentence of the novel Golding gives us a glimpse of the miraculous quality of everyday perceptions — of the commonplace experiences that most people take for granted. A dog-eared book is not usually described in terms of "bursting with a white hosanna," and yet a person used to reading who is deprived of books for a long time might well conceive of a book as just such a miracle, as a blind man recovering sight, or a thirsty man discovering an oasis, might regard his find as a miracle. A dog-eared book is no less a miracle because the perceiver has come to take it for granted, or because he has ceased truly to see.

The most amazing thing about the narrative technique of *Free Fall* is that the richness and poetic quality are sustained throughout the novel. To cite samples of his prose, in the second chapter Mountjoy alludes to the miracle of flight as perceived by Johnny: "He felt he was turning his back on the immobile earth and sharing the lucid chasms, free heights of light and air" (FF 29). There is rhythm in this passage just as in the earlier passages already examined; with simple rearrangement of the lines, it could be read as poetry. Again the assonance and use of long vowel sounds captures the mood that Golding sought to convey, and the hidden rhyme in "free heights of light and air" with the applied consonance of the "r" and "t" sounds conveys the impression of floating above





the earth. Again at random from Chapter Three; when Sammy learns of his mother's death: "All I remember is one vast, vertical sniff because it spilt the bitter liquid in a little glass" (*FF* 56). The "v", "s", and short "i" sounds are repeated here so that we can almost visualize the sniff and taste the bitterness. Again Golding combines references to the various senses (touch, smell, taste, sight and sound) all in one sentence. These passages are by no means exceptional. They are typical of Golding's style throughout the novel. If *Free Fall* is the longest of Golding's novels and the most convoluted, its greatest asset is its bountiful poetry.

The primary weakness of the novel lies in the application of the very technique which Golding referred to as his "favourite" — that of suspended revelation. He has said that the secret of narrative is "not to tell a bit of it" so that at the appropriate moment he can "knock the reader for six." In *Free Fall* he keeps the reader in suspense seemingly forever as he casts back and forth in time zeroing in on the moment of Mountjoy's fall. "Here?" "Here?" Mountjoy asks, and each time the question becomes more and more rhetorical. After 178 pages of suspense the reader expects that Mountjoy is going to drop a bomb. But his "bombshell" is a cliché, to be dismissed as a whim of adolescent infatuation. And the point at which Mountjoy believes he lost his innocence is not the point that most people would feel is his legitimate "fall".



Most would argue that when it comes to sexual possession, action speaks louder than words or thoughts. As a result the novel is anticlimactic, almost bathetic. And the high tragedy that Golding attempted in Chapter Thirteen flops miserably. For even though a certain amount of curiosity is always generated by ladies who wee themselves in public, the objective reader finishes the chapter wondering what Sammy and Kenneth are in such a flap about. Yet the whole novel hinges on the reader empathizing totally with Beatrice and agreeing with Sammy's own self-assessment: Yes, I agree that you, Sammy Mountjoy, are a heel. You shouldn't have used and deserted Beatrice the way you did.

The plot fails to convince. But the description of personal anguish and the process by which Golding gradually reveals Sammy's past are exquisite. Golding puts off the climax so long that we become impatient, but at the same time we have come a long way towards understanding Sammy Mountjoy, body and soul, as a person. Golding has fooled his reader once more, but this time not without giving him a gift into the bargain to make it all worthwhile.

A similar process works in *The Spire*, which like *Free Fall* describes the spiritual anguish of self-realization and understanding linked to the creative process as an expression of man's inner feelings. In my opinion, *The Spire* is Golding's masterpiece, combining the best qualities of all the novels that preceded it. The technique of looking through the eyes of the protagonist, Jocelin,



is familiar to us from *The Inheritors*. As in this earlier novel, we must dismiss Jocelin's prejudiced assessments, and accept the events that are perceived by him at face value. He is as unreliable as Lok, but we can learn a lot about him simply through the operation of irony provided by the reader's retention (sometimes with difficulty) of his objectivity. The marked degree of Jocelin's evil, self-deception and pride is to be found in other novels, especially in Jack of *Lord of the Flies*; and in his self-righteousness and the loneliness and intensity of his vigil, Jocelin closely resembles Christopher Martin. His final epiphany is close to that of the newly-released Sammy Mountjoy. The novel is unmarred by gimmickry or scientific inconsistency; indeed, every detail of *The Spire* seems to have been put in place as carefully as the stone, wood, mortar and glass in the structure of the spire itself. It is a novel crafted out of affection for cathedrals and all that they represent, but more importantly and lastingly out of an understanding of the deep mysteries and ironies of destiny, and of the even deeper anguish and sacrifice involved in total dedication to the powers beyond and within man, including the powers of artistic inspiration and man's need to make a mark that will be lasting as a memorial. The feats of the giants of yesterday are resurrected by Golding, out of mingled humility and awe. *The Spire* is as close to a flawless work of art as Golding has come, thoroughly researched, a novel which took Golding years, rather than weeks or months, to bring to its final state through revision and polishing. And although these





factors are not in themselves meaningful measures of quality, they do explain why and how the novel was so precisely crafted, and why it is so convincing not merely as a portrayal of thirteenth century cathedral construction, but as a medium for an expression of the joys and pain, the rewards and sacrifices, the bliss and the anguish that must accompany major artistic achievement and spiritual sensitivity. By contrast, *The Pyramid* is disjointed, rough-hewn and definitely anticlimactic.

Not that *The Pyramid* is a simple novel: indeed, its complexity, with symbolic allusions to patterns of music and the mechanics of geometry and social interaction, has been analysed at impressive length by Avril Henry.<sup>9</sup> But as in Golding's earlier novels, specifically *The Inheritors*, his imagery is obscured by the mode of presentation. In *The Pyramid*, the message of the novel and the power of its symbolism are hampered by the very structure of the book, and by the fact that the three episodes in the novel have a very tenuous connection: little more than a shared narrator. There is little consistency of mood throughout the novel. Whereas in *The Spire* the plot develops consistently from event to event as the spire grows higher and higher into the air, in *The Pyramid* the action leaps from event to event, in fact from plot to plot, without transition. In *Free Fall*, we move smoothly back and forth through time and are given in each episode a clear component picture of a segment of Mountjoy's life. But in *The Pyramid* the picture is never complete. There are great gaps in Oliver's life, so that we can never really



feel confident that we *know* him; he changes considerably from one episode to the next without any justification from the author for the change; even at the end of the first part, some inexplicable changes have occurred in Oliver in the two years since he left for Oxford — changes acceptable enough if some explanation were given for the change in personality.

The third section is similarly disjointed and puzzling, and seemingly totally disconnected from the first. It presents Oliver first of all as a juvenile and then as an adult, skipping over the period of adolescence that is treated in the earlier sections as if it hadn't happened. As Mountjoy said in *Free Fall*, there is no connection between the boy and the man, and certainly there is no consistent character development shown in terms of transition from the Oliver of Part One to the completely different Oliver of Part Three. The short second episode seems to have been an afterthought, as if Golding were aware that some transition was needed; but it is so startlingly different from the other sections with its farcical, almost slapstick comedy that it creates more of a rift than ever.

For all its disunity, *The Pyramid* is the most humorous of Golding's longer novels, and this is perhaps a major redeeming grace. Bobby's account of his activities with Evie, for example, when they stopped "for a spot of slap and tickle" by the pond, verges on the bawdy:

"Not much room in these machines. Our young friend was sitting in the front seat and I took the boards out so that I could stand on the ground. Got



it? Only we ran away — the old bus did. I must have sort of jerked the handbrake off with me arse, somehow. Now then, young Olly, heave O!" (PY 19).

Oliver is incapable of laughing at himself, and the humorous incidents are instigated from outside rather than products of his own imagination. In fact, he sees the funny side of nothing, so determined is he that others should take him seriously, and he loses his temper violently when others take him too lightly. He is selfish and gloomy, scheming and almost totally amoral — until his father passes on his pragmatic piece of advice about the type of diseases that inhabit Chandler's Close.

The second part is the most frivolous section, and if satire is all that Golding intended, quite well done. Golding's naming of the Stilbourne Operatic Society (S. O. S.) is inspired, as is the satiric naming of the town itself, and the mock war of social class and status within the context of Little Theatre (for example, when Oliver is to be given a rank as a soldier in the play), is powerful yet funny. Yet humour and symbolic complexity in isolation are not enough to redeem the novel; of the longer novels, it is certainly the most disjointed and the least convincing.

Of the works in *The Scorpion God: Three Short Novels*, "The Scorpion God" is the best and "Envoy Extraordinary" the most amusing; "Clonk Clonk" is on all counts the least perfect of Golding's works: like *The Pyramid*, it is humorous, but that is its only redeeming grace. These three novellas are a far cry from the convincing portrayal



of social interaction and gradual degradation of the boys in *Lord of the Flies*. "Clonk Clonk" is frivolous compared to the deep emotional interaction of the two tribes in *The Inheritors*. And although The Liar himself resembles Christopher Martin in his frantic will to survive at all costs, "The Scorpion God" presents a picture too abbreviated to be any more than an interesting footnote to Golding's career as a novelist.

In my view, *Lord of the Flies* and *The Spire* are the twin pinnacles of Golding's oeuvre. Immediately beneath them in quality range *Free Fall*, *The Inheritors* and *Pincher Martin*, in that order. The other works are less satisfactory, although interesting for the sake of comparison and contrast. Golding has been reasonably consistent in his presentation of character types in all of his novels, and this thesis has shown the ways in which these types conform to the three grades of thought that he mentioned in his essay "Thinking As a Hobby." The thesis has demonstrated the ways in which the concept of three grades of thought serves as a useful tool in analysis of these character types, and by application of this concept, we can come to a deeper understanding not only of Golding's novels, but of the direction of the author's thought. In applying the "formula" of three grades of thought to the works, we are able to comprehend more fully the richness, comprehensiveness, and depths of insight of Golding's own personal vision, and of his own world view as expressed in his novels.





## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER ONE: *LORD OF THE FLIES*

- <sup>1</sup>Douglas Davis. "A Conversation with Golding." *New Republic*, 4 May 1963, p. 29.
- <sup>2</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre. *What is Literature?* Bernard Frechtman, trans. New York: Harper and Row, 1965, p. 211.
- <sup>3</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Walter Kaufmann, trans. New York: Random House, 1967.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* See also James R. Baker. *William Golding: A Critical Study*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965, pp. 3-17.
- <sup>5</sup>See F. R. Leavis. *The Great Tradition*. New York: New York University Press, 1963.
- <sup>6</sup>See Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). James Strackey, trans. New York: Basic Books, 1965.
- <sup>7</sup>Claude Levi-Strauss. *Structural Anthropology*. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Gundfest Schoepf, trans. New York: Doubleday, 1967, p. 198.
- <sup>8</sup>Golding, in a contribution to "The Condition of the Novel." *New Left Review*, January-February 1965, pp. 34-35.
- <sup>9</sup>Edmund Leach. *Levi-Strauss*. London: Fontana-Collins, 1970, p. 49.
- <sup>10</sup>Levi-Strauss. *World on the Wane*. London: 1961, p. 62.
- <sup>11</sup>"The Writer in His Age." *London Magazine*, May 1957, pp. 45-56.
- <sup>12</sup>Owen Webster. "Living with Chaos." *Books and Art*, March, 1958, p. 16. Levi-Strauss adopts a similar position when he says that a person has to adopt the position of "another" before he can come to terms with the nature of man. See "Overture" to *The Raw and the Cooked*. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.
- <sup>13</sup>Apart from a series of book reviews in *The Spectator*, Golding published only two short stories and four essays between the release of *Free Fall* and the publication of "Thinking As a Hobby." Three of those essays, "The Ladder and the Tree," "Billy the Kid" and "On the Crest of the Wave,"



were subsequently republished in *The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces*. Together, these four essays constitute the nucleus of Golding's autobiographical writings.

One can only speculate as to why Golding did not republish "Thinking As a Hobby" in his collection. Bernard F. Dick has suggested that the essay was too self-revealing (See *William Golding*. New York: Twayne, 1967, p. 95). However it was later anthologized in C. J. Porter, ed. *Cross-Currents: Prose from the English-Speaking World*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1969.

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, trans. New York: Vintage Books, 1968, pp. 156-57.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-58: "Toward a critique of herd virtues, — Inertia operates (1) in trustfulness, since mistrust makes tension, observation, reflection necessary; — (2) in veneration, where the difference in power is great and submission necessary . . .; — (3) in the sense of truth. What is true? Where an explanation is given which causes us the minimum of spiritual effort . . .; — (4) in sympathy. It is a relief to count oneself the same as others, to try to feel as they do, to adopt a current feeling . . . ."

<sup>17</sup> Again we are reminded of Nietzsche: "The tendency of the herd is directed towards standstill and preservation, there is nothing creative in it" (*The Will to Power*, *op. cit.*, p. 162).

<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche, of course, would not agree that logic is "more noble" than emotional response. But his remarks about the limitations of logic are similar to those of Golding: "Our subjective compulsion to believe in logic only reveals that, long before logic itself entered our consciousness, we did nothing but introduce its postulates into events: now we discover them in events — we can no longer do otherwise — and imagine that this compulsion guarantees something connected with "truth" . . . . The world seems logical to us because we have made it logical." (*The Will to Power*, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-83). Claude Levi-Strauss adopts a similar position. Nietzsche's process of introducing the postulates of logic into events is roughly equivalent to Levi-Strauss' idea of the "pre-logical" processes of "primitive" peoples. Modern man, Levi-Strauss notes, feels smug in his reliance on the "discovery" of modern logic, and dismisses "primitives" as simple. Ethnologists have "often been prevented from trying to find out about the complex and consistent conscious systems



of societies they were studying by the assumptions they made about the simpleness and coarseness of 'primitives.' It did not occur to them that there could be such systems in societies of so low an economic and technical level since they made the unwarranted assumption that their intellectual level must be equally low." Levi Strauss' position here is essentially the same as Golding's as demonstrated in "Clonk Clonk" and *The Inheritors*. Primitive men had and have a type of logic that Levi-Strauss called "a kind of logic in tangible qualities." See *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966, pp. 40-42; and *The Raw and the Cooked*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>See TC 12: Referring to Piggy, Golding said, "He is rationalist. My great curse, you understand, rationalism — and, well, he's that. He's naive, short-sighted, and rationalist, like most scientists."

<sup>20</sup>See TC 84: Golding says of his father, "Although he said he was a rationalist, I think, nevertheless, this was in many ways a matter of profound regret for him."

<sup>21</sup>See TC 88: "My father was a scientist, and I took from him a great admiration for science, which, in a curious way, I've still got. It took me a long time at Oxford to find that I was simply pushing a ball uphill, and I really didn't care about it."

<sup>22</sup>Webster, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>23</sup>"On the Crest of the Wave." *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 June 1960, p. 387.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.* Alfred North Whitehead makes a similar point when he says of "logical or scientific myth": "It is unguarded. Its truth is limited by unexpressed presuppositions, and as time goes on we discover some of these limitations." *Modes of Thought*. New York: The Free Press, 1968, p. 11. He also stated that morality, logic, religion and art are all equally important. See also the discussion between Harvey Cox and George Harris in "Religion in the Age of Aquarius: A Conversation," in *Mystery, Magic and Miracle: Religion in a Post-Aquarian Age*. Edward Heenan, ed. Englewood-Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973, pp. 17-18. Cox says, "We have spent the last few hundred years with our cultural attention focussed dourly on the "outside" factual world — exploring, investigating and mastering it . . . . The absurd, the inspiring, the uncanny, the awesome, the terrifying, the ecstatic — none





of these fits into a production- and efficiency-oriented society . . . . Having systematically stunted the Dionysian side of the whole human, we assume that man is naturally just a reliable, slave-catching Apollonian."

- <sup>25</sup>In adopting this position, Golding joins many other writers, from the Dickens of *Hard Times* through Conrad, Lawrence, Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis to Graham Greene. He also comes fairly close to the philosophical positions of Whitehead and Samuel Alexander.
- <sup>26</sup>"On the Crest of the Wave," *op. cit.* See also "All or Nothing," *Spectator*, 24 March 1961, p. 410. The notion of "cosmic balance" between the world of spirit and the world of matter expressed by Golding equates with Nietzsche's "cosmic dancer" who dances from one position to the other, never resting heavily on either one.
- <sup>27</sup>Martin Buber. *Between Man and Man*. Gregor Smith, trans. London: Collins, 1964.
- Paul Tillich also referred to the quest of Truth as a subjective pursuit, if only because Truth itself was subjective: "Truth is just that subjectivity which does not disregard its despair, its exclusion from the objective world of essence, but which holds to it passionately" (*The Interpretation of History*. N. A. Rosseth and Elsa L. Talinay, trans. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936, p. 61). Thus while subjective, it betokens a blending of the subjective and the objective, which are approximately equivalent to Golding's "spiritual" and "physical." One of Tillich's many definitions of "God" consists of a type of Truth which as George F. McLean puts it, overcomes "the separation of subject and object to provide a deeper synthesis of the reality of both." (George F. McLean, "Paul Tillich's Existential Philosophy of Protestantism," in *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*. Thomas F. O'Meara and Donald M. Weisser, eds. New York: Image Books, 1969, p. 89).
- <sup>28</sup>See "On the Crest of the Wave," *op. cit.*
- <sup>29</sup>Einstein. *The World As I See It*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949, p. 5.
- <sup>30</sup>Einstein. *Out of My Later Years*. Totowa: Littlefield, Adams, 1967, p. 68. See also Kuznetsov, *Einstein*. New York: Phaedra, 1970, p. 372.
- <sup>31</sup>Kuznetsov, *op. cit.*, p. 104.



<sup>32</sup>Einstein. *Ideas and Opinions*. New York: Bonanza, 1954, p. 342.

<sup>33</sup>Einstein had his own similar notion of superior thought, and explained it in *Out of My Later Years* in terms of the connection of the outside (the "What") with the inside (the "How"): "The connection of the elementary concepts of everyday thinking with complexes of sense experiences can only be comprehended intuitively and it is inadoptable to scientifically logical fixation" (p. 61). As Edwin Schlossberg explains it, "What is on the outside. How is on the inside. Intuition has led the way between the two . . . the hard was on the inside and the bitter and sweet on the outside. We learned how to strain after new experience by this tension led by the intuition; the compulsion to understand that we could understand" (*Einstein and Beckett*. New York: Links Books, 1973, pp. 11, 12). Simon's determination to discover the nature of the beast on the island obeys this formula of searching for the "truth" of things.

<sup>34</sup>"All or Nothing." *The Spectator*, March 24, 1961, p. 410. Steiner was the founder of Anthroposophy, in which Golding took a deep interest for an unspecified period of about three years. In a questionnaire on Steiner, he was asked:

1) As a writer who has paid serious attention to Steiner, you are likely to be constantly aware of new themes which call for new forms of expression. Has Steiner helped you (a) in defining these and (b) in feeling your way towards new methods and techniques?

2) Has Steiner helped you to (a) a judgement of your own position as an artist in the latter half of the 20th century and (b) to an understanding of the creative process?

3) Has your study of Anthroposophy inhibited you in any way as a writer? Do you feel exposed to any particular writing dangers or put at a disadvantage in your relations with publishers and critics?

To these questions, Golding responded:

I think your questions are quite unanswerable: and if they are to be answered, then only the books I have written or may write in the future can answer them one way or the other. Steiner is *there*; a historical fact, a process, a society even, with which I have been acquainted and which I am unlikely to forget any more than I am likely to forget any three-year period of my life.



See Joy Mansfield. "Writers and Anthroposophy: Some Questions and Answers." *Golden Blade*, 1966, pp. 113-118. Perhaps the most succinct summary of Steiner's views is to be found in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1959), "Steiner, Rudolf," Vol. 21, p. 374:

Anthroposophy postulates the existence of a spiritual world comprehensible to pure thinking but fully accessible only to the higher faculties of knowledge latent in every man. Historically, Steiner regarded man as having originally participated in the spiritual processes of the world through a dreamlike consciousness out of which the more limited but aware consciousness of today has crystallized. He claimed that an enhanced consciousness can again achieve perception of the spiritual worlds.

Although Golding does not adhere to Anthroposophy — or anything else — as a system, he obviously does sympathize with it, and certainly those of his characters who manage to attain "the higher qualities of knowledge" latent within them — his first grade thinkers — "achieve perception of spiritual worlds" that are akin to epiphany.

<sup>35</sup>"All or Nothing," p. 410.

<sup>36</sup>Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

## CHAPTER TWO: *LORD OF THE FLIES*

<sup>1</sup>See Thomas Marcellus Coskren. "Is Golding Calvinistic? A More Optimistic Interpretation of the Symbolism Found in *Lord of the Flies*." *America*, 6 July 1963, pp. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup>See "Fable," *passim*, in *HG*.

<sup>3</sup>See Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-17; Robert C. Gordon. "Classical Themes in *Lord of the Flies*." *Modern Fiction Studies*, II (Winter 1965-66), 424-27; and Bernard F. Dick. "Lord of the Flies and the Bacchae." *Classical World*, January 1964, pp. 145-46.

<sup>4</sup>See Carl Niemeyer. "The Coral Island Revisited." *College English*, January 1961, pp. 241-45.

<sup>5</sup>Frank Kermode. "The Meaning of it All." *Books and Bookmen*, October 1959, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>See "Androids All," Golding's review of *New Maps of Hell* by Kingsley





Amis. *Spectator*, 24 February 1961, pp. 263-64; and "Astronaut by Gaslight," Golding's review of the works of Jules Verne. *Spectator*, 9 June 1961, pp. 841-42. When asked by Jack Biles if he considered *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* to be science fiction, Golding replied, "No, not in the least. They seem to me to be just the kind of straightforward things that people want to write, in the circumstances they find themselves in" (TC 4).

<sup>7</sup> Oswald Spengler would have said that the boys, as "beasts of prey," merely returned to their natural state. Hobbes too has been quoted by critics of Golding to describe the process of deterioration into "chaos" that occurs in *Lord of the Flies* (See Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 215 ff.; and Hobbes' *Leviathan*. London: Collins, 1962, p. 143). But Jack and the "beast" form in themselves a "common power" which usurps Ralph's chieftainship. Spengler's position is summarized by Martin Buber: "Oswald Spengler wishes to establish the special sphere of the political, as having a value independent of our therefore inaccessible ethics, by classifying man with beasts of prey. If no longer between tamed individuals yet certainly between the groups, conditions (he says) are always, necessarily and normally, like those between packs of beasts" (Buber. *Between Man and Man*, *op. cit.*, p. 96).

<sup>8</sup> See Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*, *op. cit.*, p. 162: "I teach: the herd seeks to preserve one type and defends itself on both sides, against those who have degenerated from it . . . and those who tower above it."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157: *The herd instinct speaks . . . .* For the sake of the whole, it hates those who detach themselves — it turns the hatred of all individuals against them."

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>13</sup> In an interview with Jack Biles, Golding talked at length about Jack and identified his social problem simply as one of "delinquency":

What you are using to a good end in your choir, in your nice, safe Salisbury society, is in fact something which in itself is vicious . . . .





You have people of Jack's nature, who are by nature evil, but who can be so integrated into a larger society that their evil is canalized in a good direction or, at least, a possible direction after all . . . . Their desire, their real wish, for authority is to dominate other people. If they can be got to do this legally, that is a triumph for everybody (TC 16).

Ralph tries to "canalize" Jack's propensity for violence by placing him at the head of the hunters, but this move proves to be a mixed blessing. Although it keeps Jack occupied in a legal way, so to speak, it also takes away the majority of the "biguns" who could have helped with shelters, and it divides the loyalty of the hunters between their direct leader, Jack, and their chief, Ralph.

<sup>14</sup> See Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*. Hazel E. Barnes, trans. New York: The Citadel Press, 1971, pp. lxv-lxvi, 49 ff.

<sup>15</sup> See TC 12, where Golding says,  
 I am, up to a point, inside Ralph's skull, and he is weeping for the end of innocence and the darkness of man's heart and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy. Those are things seen entirely from inside Ralph. Nobody else can see them. And, he should be weeping for Simon . . . . He doesn't understand. He understands Piggy. He understands Piggy, and thinks him wise. Piggy isn't wise. Piggy is short-sighted. He is rationalist. My great curse, you understand, rationalism — and, well, he's that. He's naive, short-sighted and rationalist, like most scientists.

<sup>16</sup> In Sartre's terminology (in *Being and Nothingness*), Piggy's failure resides in the fact that he as a For-itself attempts to view himself as an "In-itself," i. e., to ground himself in "fact" and deny the contingency of man's fate — to treat the human psyche or consciousness as a "thing" (*op. cit.*, pp. lxiii and 43).

<sup>17</sup> Alan W. Watts. *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968, pp. 232-34. Watts' "Self" here is the *Scintillans Dei* to which Golding referred in a letter to Archie Campbell quoted in "William Golding: Pincher Martin." *From the Fifties*. Michael Bakewell and Eric Ewens, eds. London: 1961, p. 34.



- <sup>18</sup> Compare what Joseph Campbell had to say about the hero:  
 The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands — and the two are atoned" (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Second Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 147).
- <sup>19</sup> Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Moses Hadas. *Introduction to Classical Drama*. New York: 1966, p. 74.
- <sup>21</sup> Bernard F. Dick. "'The Novelist Is a Displaced Person': An Interview with William Golding." *College English*, March 1965, p. 481. Golding has often emphasized his affinity with the Greeks. Asked about his "literary parentage," he replied, "I should name thunderous great names like Euripides, and Sophocles" (interview with James Keating in May 1962, quoted by James Baker, *op. cit.*, p. xvii). Baker, Robert Gordon and Bernard Dick have all demonstrated that the mythical base of *Lord of the Flies* lies in the *Bacchae* (see note 3 above). Agave's placing Pentheus' severed head on a stick exactly parallels the "alternative conclusion" of Golding's novel.
- <sup>22</sup> Kermode, p. 9.
- <sup>23</sup> Dick. "The Novelist Is a Displaced Person," *op. cit.*, p. 481.

### CHAPTER THREE: *THE INHERITORS*

- <sup>1</sup> Dick. "The Novelist Is a Displaced Person," *op. cit.*, pp. 480-82.
- <sup>2</sup> Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes. "Introduction" to *The Inheritors* (Educational Edition). London: 1964.
- <sup>3</sup> Mark Adriaens. "Style in W. Golding's *The Inheritors*." *English Studies*, 51 (February 1970), 16-30.
- <sup>4</sup> Kirby L. Duncan. "William Golding and Vardis Fisher: A Study of Parallels and Extensions." *College English*, December 1965, pp. 232-35.



- <sup>5</sup>E. C. Bufkin. "The Ironic Art of William Golding's *The Inheritors*." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 9 (Winter 1968), 567-78.
- <sup>6</sup>Ralph Freedman. "The New Realism: The Fancy of William Golding." *Perspective*, 10 (Summer-Autumn 1958), 118-28.
- <sup>7</sup>Arthur Broes. "The Two Worlds of William Golding." *Lectures on Modern Novelists. Carnegie Series in English*, No. 7. 1963. pp. 1-14.
- <sup>8</sup>Samuel Hynes. *William Golding. Columbia Essays on Modern Writers*, No. 2. New York: 1964.
- <sup>9</sup>Bernard Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub. *The Art of William Golding*. New York: 1965, pp. 66-67.
- <sup>10</sup>Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes. *William Golding: A Critical Study*. New York: 1968, p. 106 (first published in London in 1967).
- <sup>11</sup>Howard S. Babb. *The Novels of William Golding*. Columbus: 1970, pp. 39, 59-61.
- <sup>12</sup>Compare Golding's view of the Delphic oracle in "Delphi: The Oracle Revealed." *Holiday*, August 1967, p. 88. Golding quotes his friend Peter, "Pythia mouthed; then the priests decided what she had said, and gave you the official version a day or two later." See also Emile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Joseph Swain, trans. London: Allen and Unwin, 1915, p. 48.
- <sup>13</sup>Here Lok seems to bridge the linguistic gap between true man and proto-man. Rousseau, in "An Essay on the Origin of Languages" (Geneva, 1783, p. 565) wrote, "the first speech was all in poetry, reasoning was thought of only long afterwards." He, along with many other philosophers from Aristotle to Wittgenstein, believed that what made man different from animals was his capacity to speak. Claude Levi-Strauss takes Rousseau's thesis one step further when he says that man became what he is only when he learned to employ metaphor in his language (*Totemism*. London: 1964, p. 101).
- <sup>14</sup>In all of his novels, Golding uses names to the best possible advantage. Thus Ralph and Jack are names borrowed from the characters in Ballantyne's *Coral Island*, and the Peterkin of Ballantyne's novel becomes Simon — with all the Christian connotations of Simon Peter. "Piggy" allows





Golding to draw an affinity between the human and animal victims of the savages. The names of Posthumus and Mamillius in "Envoy Extraordinary" are puns, as are the names "Mountjoy" and "Ifor" in *Free Fall*, and "Pincher" in *Pincher Martin*. Also in *Pincher Martin*, the characters are named after the saints (Peter, George and Helen); Nathaniel is the name of the Apostle without Guile, and Mary has obvious holy connotations. In *The Inheritors*, Golding puns with names just as much as in the other novels. Mal, the old Neanderthal, is "mal" — sick. The name of Marlan, superstitious leader of the new people, is a marred version of Merlin and has overtones of Mal, the other leader. "Vivani" implies life; "Tanakil" implies death; whereas "Tuami" implies "You-friend." And what about "'Tu' am I" or "Thou am I"? This is close to Buber's "I-Thou" — the relationship that is the first step towards apprehending the Divine.

<sup>15</sup>"Delphi: The Oracle Revealed," *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

#### CHAPTER FOUR: *PINCHER MARTIN*

<sup>1</sup>Richard Tyre. "Introduction" to *Sometime, Never*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1956. "Envoy Extraordinary" was first published almost simultaneously with *Pincher Martin*, but was written before the longer novel. Golding told Owen Webster in 1958 that after completing *Pincher Martin* "it left him exhausted for months and that he has only recently recovered, writing *nothing since* but a *stage adaptation* of a short story called "Envoy Extraordinary" (Webster, "Living with Chaos," *op. cit.*, p. 16. *Italics mine*). The implication of this statement is that "Envoy Extraordinary" itself had already been written *before* Golding completed *Pincher Martin*. The process of publication of *Sometime, Never*, in which "Envoy Extraordinary" first appeared, probably took longer than *Pincher Martin*, if only because it was edited as a collection of three novelettes by three different authors. The two books were released less than a month apart, *Pincher Martin* in October and *Sometime, Never* in November, 1956. Golding wrote in a letter to me that he could not remember which of "Envoy Extraordinary" and *Pincher Martin* he wrote first, but indicated that they were both written at about the same time. The novelette was republished in *The Scorpion God: Three Short Novels* in 1971.



<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Stevens. "Man is Born to Sin." *Books and Bookmen*, April 1964, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>See "Steam." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1959, Vol. 21, p. 354: "In the *Pneumatica* of Hero of Alexandria (c. 130 B. C.) there is described the aeolipile, which may be called a primitive steam reaction turbine . . . . Hero's volume also mentions another device which may be described as the prototype of the pressure engine."

<sup>4</sup>Note the similarity between Phanocles and Pangall of *The Spire* on this point. Pangall does not see that there is any danger to his wife; he is afraid only for himself.

<sup>5</sup>Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 54.

<sup>6</sup>For the kaleidoscope interpretation see W. J. Harvey, "The Reviewing of Contemporary Fiction." *Essays in Criticism*, April 1958, pp. 182-87; and Lee M. Whitehead. "The Moment out of Time: Golding's *Pincher Martin*." *Contemporary Literature*, XII (1971), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>The "purgatory" interpretation is the view put forward by Golding himself. See TC 74-76; and Kermode. "The Meaning of It All," *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>Kermode, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup>See E. C. Bufkin. "*Pincher Martin*: William Golding's Morality Play." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, (October 1969), 5-16.

<sup>10</sup>Compare Sartre's *No Exit*, in which three characters are portrayed as being in "Hell," and are punished by being forced after death to cope with the fruits of their personalities and behaviour during life. Now that they are dead, they have no opportunity to change the "Being" of what they were in life. Martin has a similar fate: where in life he was eater, in death he is eaten. But, on a more profound level, like Piggy, he has sacrificed his For-itself for the In-itself by trying to possess his being as a thing. See *Being and Nothingness*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup>Watts, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>12</sup>Golding. "*Pincher Martin*." *Radio Times*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup>Broes, *op. cit.*



- <sup>14</sup>Michael Gallagher. "The Human Image in William Golding." *Studies*, 54 (Summer-Autumn 1965), p. 203.
- <sup>15</sup>Lee M. Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- <sup>16</sup>Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes. *William Golding: A Critical Study*, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-24. In Sartre's terms, Martin is a "For-itself" divorced from "In-itself," but trying to view itself in terms of "In-itself."
- <sup>17</sup>See Norman N. Greene. *Jean-Paul Sartre: The Existentialist Ethic*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963, pp. 25-26.
- <sup>18</sup>In Kermode, *op. cit.*, p. 10. Again, compare Sartre's *No Exit*.
- <sup>19</sup>Letter to Archie Campbell, quoted in "William Golding, *Pincher Martin*." *From the Fifties*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation Sound Radio Drama Series, 1961, p. 34.
- <sup>20</sup>See George H. Thompson's treatment of this theme in "William Golding: Between God-Darkness and God-Light." *Cresset*, 32 (June 1969), pp. 8-12.
- <sup>21</sup>This idea is similar to Kierkegaard's concept of Dread: "How is spirit related to itself and to its situation? It is related as dread. The spirit cannot do away with itself; nor can it grasp itself so long as it has itself outside of itself. Neither can man sink down into the vegetative life, for he is determined as spirit" (*The Concept of Dread*, *op. cit.*, p. 40).
- <sup>22</sup>John Peter. "Post Script." In Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
- <sup>23</sup>Watts, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- <sup>24</sup>Golding. "Pincher Martin." *Radio Times*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- <sup>25</sup>Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
- <sup>26</sup>Sartre. *The Psychology of the Imagination*. Bernard Frechtman, trans. New York: Rider, 1965, pp. 233-46. See also Lee M. Whitehead, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-38.
- <sup>27</sup>Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*, *op. cit.*, p. 16 ff.
- <sup>28</sup>Compare Golding's own experiences as recorded in "The Ladder and the Tree" (HG 166-67).



<sup>29</sup>This description resembles Kierkegaard's concept of the subjective "demoniacal" in *The Sickness unto Death*.

<sup>30</sup>The name is doubly significant in light of the similar role of Davidson in Conrad's *Victory*, in which a "Martin" is also the embodiment of greed and evil. Lee M. Whitehead also draws a comparison between *Pincher Martin* and *Lord Jim*: "Like Christopher Martin, Lord Jim discovered an isolated place where, by the pure exercise of the imagination, he too could create his own purgatories" (p. 34).

<sup>31</sup>"All or Nothing," *op. cit.*, p. 410.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

#### CHAPTER FIVE: *FREE FALL*

<sup>1</sup>Frank MacShane. "The Novels of William Golding." *Dalhousie Review*, 42 (Summer 1962), p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>John Wain. "Lord of the Agonies." *Aspect*, April, 1963, pp. 66-67.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard F. Dick. *William Golding*. Twayne's English Authors Series, No. 57. New York: Twayne, 1967, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard F. Dick. "The Pyramid: Mr. Golding's 'New' Novel." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 2 (October 1969), p. 85.

<sup>5</sup>Oldsey and Weintraub, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-122.

<sup>6</sup>Ted E. Boyle. "'The Denial of the Spirit': An Explication of William Golding's *Free Fall*." *Wascana Review*, 1 (1966), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>12</sup>John Milton. *Paradise Lost*. III, 95-99.





- <sup>13</sup> See "Billy the Kid" (HG 161): "Fighting proved to be just as delightful as I had thought. I was chunky and zestful and enjoyed hurting people. I exalted in victory, in the complete subjugation of my adversary, and thought that they should enjoy it too — or at least be glad to suffer for my sake. For this reason, I was puzzled when the supply of opponents diminished. Soon, I had to corner victims before I could get a fight at all."
- <sup>14</sup> See Sartre's *The Republic of Silence*.
- <sup>15</sup> In this, Golding again falls into the Cartesian, dualistic tradition, and into the existential tradition of Kierkegaard, who wrote in *The Concept of Dread*, "Everything turns upon dread coming into view. Man is a synthesis of the soulish and the bodily. But a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third factor. This third factor is the spirit" (p. 39). Kierkegaard is talking about man's constant state of being a conscious "soul" within a physical "body," whereas Golding is referring to man's ability at once to conceive of rational, stable events occurring in a physical world and of irrational, unexpected "miracles" of perception occurring in a spiritual world. Nonetheless, in Golding's conception, consciousness itself is a "miracle" — and therefore a manifestation of the World of Spirit.
- <sup>16</sup> Harold T. Betteridge, ed. *Cassell's German and English Dictionary*. London: Cassell, 1957, p. 214.
- <sup>17</sup> Watts, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. A. N. Whitehead. *Modes of Thought*, *op. cit.*: "Understanding is never a completed static of mind. It always bears the character of a process of penetration, incomplete and partial" (p. 43). And later, "Understanding is self-evidence. But our clarity of intuition is limited and it flickers" (p. 50).
- <sup>19</sup> Kierkegaard. *The Concept of Dread*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-40.
- <sup>20</sup> Compare Dante's description of heaven: *Paradisio*, XXXIII, 49-57.
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. Buber's position in *Between Man and Man*.
- <sup>22</sup> Sartre goes one step further in *What Is Literature?* when he says, "Evil cannot be redeemed" (p. 211).



CHAPTER SIX: *THE SPIRE*

- <sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Stevens, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- <sup>2</sup>Walter Sullivan. "The Long Chronicle of Guilt: William Golding's *The Spire*." *Hollins Critic*, 1 (June 1964), p. 12.
- <sup>3</sup>Jeanne C. Miller. "Elusive and Obscure." *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 40 (Autumn 1964), p. 671.
- <sup>4</sup>George H. Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-12.
- <sup>5</sup>D. Carmichael. "A God in Ruins." *Quadrant*, 33 (January-February 1965), p. 74.
- <sup>6</sup>Michael Gallagher, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
- <sup>7</sup>James R. Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.
- <sup>8</sup>D. W. Crompton. "*The Spire*." *Critical Quarterly*, 9 (Spring 1967) pp. 67, 73.
- <sup>9</sup>Howard S. Babb, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
- <sup>10</sup>Leighton Hodson. *William Golding*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969, p. 98.
- <sup>11</sup>Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.
- <sup>13</sup>Crompton, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
- <sup>14</sup>Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
- <sup>15</sup>The contemporary tone of the dialogue here parallels that of the novelettes, all of which are set in the past. See Chapter Seven.
- <sup>16</sup>Cf. Buber, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-15.
- <sup>17</sup>George McLean, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.



CHAPTER SEVEN: *THE PYRAMID*

- <sup>1</sup>*The Observer*, 4 June 1967.
- <sup>2</sup>*New York Review of Books*, IX (7 December 1967), p. 21.
- <sup>3</sup>Dick. "The Pyramid: Mr. Golding's 'New' Novel," *op. cit.*, p. 85.  
See "On the Escarpment." *Kenyon Review*, XXIV (June 1967), p. 311.
- <sup>4</sup>Avril Henry. "William Golding: *The Pyramid*." *Southern Review: An Australian Journal of Literary Studies*, 3 (1968), pp. 5-31.
- <sup>5</sup>Marshall Walker. "William Golding: From Paradigm to Pyramid." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 2 (October 1969), pp. 67-82.
- <sup>6</sup>"Prospect of Eton." *The Spectator*, 25 November 1960, pp. 856-57.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup>See Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*, *op. cit.*, pp. 350, 354-57, 369 ff.
- <sup>9</sup>Cf. Buber, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
- <sup>10</sup>Dick. "The Pyramid: Mr. Golding's 'New' Novel," *op. cit.*
- <sup>11</sup>Letter to me dated August 11, 1974. See the discussion of "Envoy Extraordinary" at the beginning of Chapter Four above.
- <sup>12</sup>This position is the same as that adopted by Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind*.
- <sup>13</sup>*The Observer*, October 21, 1971.
- <sup>14</sup>See the discussion of this point in Chapter Three above.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

- <sup>1</sup>See Eugene W. Davis. "Mr. Golding's Optical Delusion." *English Language Notes*, 3 (December 1965), 125-26.
- <sup>2</sup>See Golding's "It's a Long Way to Oxyrhynchus." *Spectator*, 7 July 1961, p. 9.





<sup>3</sup>There are several other "flaws" of a less obvious nature. Sam and Eric are included among the hunters, and yet were not part of the choir that was assigned responsibilities of hunting and tending fires. On the other hand, Simon, who was one of the choir, is not considered to be a hunter responsible to Jack. The boys have survived a crash landing of such impact that large trees were smashed down in the forest to leave a "scar;" yet not one boy received the slightest injury in the crash, and their memories of the traumatic incident belie the description of what must have happened. Inexplicably, the boys on the island escaped from the tube whereas other children and their adult companion were swept out to sea by the wind in the immensely heavy passenger tube that smashed the forest in the first place. In spite of the ferocity of the storm, none of the boys got wet or sought the protection companionship might bring at its height. None of them seems to have any idea how they disembarked from the tube, except that they share the vague notion that they had been "scattered about" (LF 13).

<sup>4</sup>*The Outline of History*. New York: Garden City Publishing, 1920, pp. 74-86. Golding quotes this book in the epigram of *The Inheritors*. Anthropologists still differ in their opinions regarding the relationship of Neanderthal man and modern man. Modern dating puts Neanderthal man back to 300,000 years on the time continuum, but modern man goes back even further, if recent findings at the Olduvai Gorge are accurate. See Graham Clark. *The Stone Age Hunters*. New York: 1967, p. 40, and *The Fossil Evidence for Human Evolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955; Loring Brace. *The Stages of Human Evolution*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1967; and Maitland E. Edey. *The Emergence of Man: The Missing Link*. New York: Time-Life Books, 1972, pp. 140-41.

<sup>5</sup>See especially James Gordin. "'Gimmick' and Metaphor in the Novels of William Golding." *Modern Fiction Studies*, VI (1960), 145-52; W. J. Harvey. "The Reviewing of Contemporary Fiction." *Essays in Criticism*, 8 (April 1958), 182-87; and Wayland Young. "Letter from London." *Kenyon Review*, 19 (Summer 1957), 478-82. Golding himself first used the term "gimmick" in referring to his novels in an interview with Frank Kermode ("The Meaning of It All," *op. cit.*, p. 10).

<sup>6</sup>See especially the letters by J. C. Maxwell (August 21, 1959, p. 483); Edwin Morgan (28 August 1959, p. 495); W. G. Daish (4 September 1959, p. 507); and Owen Webster (11 September 1959, p. 519).



<sup>7</sup>See "Clonk Clonk," where the reader is informed in the last sentence that all the events he has been witnessing occurred 100,000 years ago.

<sup>8</sup>Golding himself had a similar, tense grin. Cf. E. L. Epstein, "Notes on William Golding and *Pincher Martin*," in the Capricorn edition of *Pincher Martin*, p. 212. See also TC 28, where Golding describes his grin as "the only thing I really remember in the war . . . . I grinned, just to show everybody that there was nothing to worry about . . . .I was so frightened that this grin got stuck on my face, and it went on all morning. We got shot up and everything . . . and I couldn't get rid of my grin." Significantly, Golding related his "tense grin" to the proximity of death. When a signal came through for him to cancel his raid on Walcheren, he recounted, "I suddenly thought, 'My God, I'm going to live,' and my grin fell off" (TC 29). See also Howard S. Babb. "On the Ending of *Pincher Martin*." *Essays in Criticism*, 14 (January 1964), p. 107.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Chapter Seven above.



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This bibliography has three major divisions: works by William Golding, criticism and commentary relating to his works, and works used or referred to in the text of the thesis that are not directly related to Golding. In general, I have followed the same format as Jack I. Biles' "A William Golding Checklist" (see item 443), but this bibliography is much expanded from that of Dr. Biles. As in his checklist, entries are numbered consecutively throughout, and the bibliography is organized as follows:

### WORKS BY WILLIAM GOLDING

- I. Longer Works (with Initial Reviews)
- II. Shorter Works
  - A. Short Fiction
  - B. Essays
  - C. Miscellaneous
  - D. Book Reviews

### CRITICISM AND COMMENTARY

- I. Books and Dissertations
- II. Parts of Books and Dissertations
- III. Articles, Interviews, etc.

### OTHER REFERENCES

I have also followed Dr. Biles' abbreviations for references to essays contained in collections:

*HG     The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces, by  
          William Golding*



- CB     *Casebook Edition of "Lord of the Flies,"* by James R. Baker and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr.
- SB     *William Golding's "Lord of the Flies": A Source Book,* by William Nelson.
- GM     *A William Golding Miscellany (Studies in the Literary Imagination),* by Jack I. Biles.

I have read most of the items entered, with the exception of some of the dissertations which were not obtainable, and articles in languages other than French, German and English.

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